TRIBEBOOK:

Red Talons™

Culling the Herd

This is no place for a wolf.

The mud clings to Red Shadow's paws as she runs along behind Blood Rain and his pack. The swamp water fills their tracks and the smell of it distracts her. It doesn't smell like earth. It doesn't smell like water. It has an odd, thick scent that muffles her own, the other wolves', their prey's. After a hunt, Blood Rain says, the pack will need to go to the salty water to bathe, or else they will all smell like swamp water for days. At first Red Shadow hadn't known why this was such a bad thing — covering her own scent would make her a more stealthy hunter, wouldn't it? But after an hour in the bayou, she understands. The swamp-scent is greedy. It wants the wolves to carry it.

She hears an owl scream and other birds answer. The swamp is restless tonight. Red Shadow slows and lowers her head, cautiously, peering out into the bayou for alligators. The cowardly beasts have no scent until they strike, and then they smell rancid and hot. A 'gator pulled one of Blood Rain's pack under some time ago. He was not Garou, but a Kin wolf. He never resurfaced. Red Shadow thinks on him now and feels a heaviness in her gut that she can't identify. She runs on, with a backward glance at the water.

The pack is hunting. She tries not to think of them as her pack, because she has a pack of her own. But her pack, bonded by Raccoon and led by a homid Garou, is clumsy and fractious. In Blood Rain's pack, she knows her place and does not feel the constant uneasiness she does with her true pack. She wonders if this is wrong. It does not seem to come from her human-mind, but neither can she find a similar feeling in her wolf-heart. She stops wondering and focuses on the hunt.

Red Shadow's feet ache from the effort of pulling them from the mud. Their prey is far away tonight. She looks at the others — four Garou, one a cub not yet through his Rite of Passage — and wonders again. She wonders if they are tired or cold. She decides they must be, because they all have the same fur and the same skin. But they do not show it and neither does she. And on they run.

• • •

The prey huddles together, frightened and cold. Even though they cannot smell or hear the wolves coming — they are still too far away — some instinct tells them they are in danger. The young gather close

to their parents. They all look out towards the bayou, not knowing why, simply feeling afraid.

• • •

The ground grows solid under Red Shadow's paws. They are leaving the bayou, but the swamp water clings to them like human clothing, unnecessary and uncomfortable. She had to wear human clothing for the first time recently. Her pack said it was a sundress. She didn't understand, but her alpha told her to do it. And then her alpha had asked for her approval! She stood there wearing a weak, human body covered in a second skin, colored in a way she couldn't understand, and tried to whine, but she couldn't, not with a human throat. She'd felt that heaviness in her stomach then, too, but hadn't tried to understand it.

Red Shadow's ears perk as a muskrat sees the pack and dives for cover. The cub with the pack starts off after it, but Rush-of-Wind-Howl, the Gibbous-Moon, growls at him and he returns to the pack. Red Shadow lowers her tail a bit; she nearly chased the prey herself. But she understands — this hunt is more important than finding food.

That strange notion rattles around in her heart for some time. More important than finding food? It must be, for she has learned that her mission as a Garou is more important than her life as a wolf. More important than finding a warm place to sleep? Red Shadow tests that notion in her wolf-heart and finds no disagreement. More important than mating? She has never mated, so her wolf-heart is still silent. More important than her true pack?

Her wolf-heart beats fast, trying to tell her how to feel. But at the same time, her human-mind speaks. She shakes her head a bit and coughs. The other werewolves look back at her, but she ignores them.

If this hunt — tonight — is more important than her true pack, then why is her true pack not with her? Because only Red Talons undertake this hunt, answers her human-mind. Then they should know about this hunt, but Blood Rain told her not to tell them. Her wolf-heart cries out, but she cannot place the feeling. She feels the bond between her and her packmates tug at her, and she wishes to call out to them and tell them where she is. But the Litany — now so deeply ingrained in her that her wolf-heart feels it just as her human-mind knows it — says that she must submit to those greater in station. Blood Rain is greater in station, both higher-ranked and stronger than she.

Which is right? As a Philodox, she knows she must answer these questions. But on her Rite of Passage, she was only presented with questions that *had* answers. This one, both her heart and mind tell her, does not. She runs closer to the head of the pack, looking ahead to the dark woods, looking for answers there. She cannot smell or see any.

• • •

The prey is on the move. They still cannot see or smell the wolves, but they know, somehow, that the pack is coming for them. They begin to shift, uncomfortably, and then to move, slowly at first, and then faster, away from the clearing where they were nesting for the night. If asked, even by one who could understand them, they could never understand why they feel the way they do. They have never been hunted before. But some place in their primitive minds knows the feeling, and tells them to run.

And run they do.

• • •

Blood Rain stops and snarls at the wind. Red Shadow lifts her muzzle and sniffs. She smells it, too — the prey is moving. Blood Rain turns toward the moon and begins trotting faster. Even as fast as the prey can move, the wolves will catch them, because they can cross terrain that their prey cannot.

Red Shadow thinks about prey. She is not from the swamps. No wolf is. She hunted prey in a pack when she was a pup, the ground solid underfoot and the trees raining down fresh and sweet smells. The ground caught these smells and kept them for the prey to change and the wolves to mark with their own. The ground did not produce its own smells to cling to the wolves.

But Red Shadow must have had her own smell that clung to her, for the other wolves were afraid. She found her own prey, but it wasn't the same. She was not the alpha, and even when she caught her food she felt strange eating first.

In the days before her Rite of Passage, Red Shadow would often howl, feeling that she wished she could go back and hunt with her pack again, not knowing if that wish came from her human-mind or wolf-heart. Blood Rain told her than the wolf-heart does not wish, it merely knows. Red Shadow did not disagree, but she isn't sure. To her, wishing is like hunger, and the wolf-heart knows about hunger. Maybe a wish is a hunger of the human-mind.

Red Shadow thinks about prey, about how the humans killed the wolves and now the prey are everywhere, eating themselves into starvation. She once felt rage when she thought of humans. If she thinks of them under the half-moon or for too long, sometimes she still does. But she doesn't see them often, and homid Garou aren't human, as much as they look it. Their smell is wild and electric, somewhere between water and storm and blood. Human-smell is false from the paints they use on themselves.

Blood Rain thinks all the humans should die. He says they die easily, and if all of the Garou were to act swiftly, they could kill the strong humans first and hunt the weak. Something about that plan stirs Red Shadow's wolf-heart, but she can't tell if it approves or not. And so on she runs, behind Blood Rain, feeling like a pup again.

The pack changes direction, and the ground slopes away. The valley is small, and Red Shadow knows that a warren of rabbits is nearby. Her tongue lolls out as she thinks of rabbit, feels the chase, the sudden turns, the leap, and finally the satisfying crunch as tiny bones break in her jaws. She wishes/hungers for rabbit. She has not eaten one in some time. Strange-Smile, the Crescent-Moon, taught Red Shadow about thanking the prey's spirit after eating. She always does so now, even when her pack finds already-dead food for her, even if she does not know the prey's name, she thanks it. Thanking the spirit shows respect. She is to respect all beneath her. Does that include humans? Are humans prey? The Litany prohibits eating them. But they are beneath Garou, because they are stupid and nearly blind.

Red Shadow said that once to her pack. "Then why," Stone Beast, the No-Moon, asked, "do they rule the world?"

On her Rite of Passage, Red Shadow learned that No-Moons question to teach. But although she understood Stone Beast's question, she cannot think what she has learned from it.

• • •

The prey stops. They merge with another herd, and stay together. They are not quiet. The night carries their noise to the wolves, but they have forgotten their feeling of terror. Now they eat, unable to sense the pack. They might have escaped, had they not stopped here.

• • •

The wolves climb the side of the valley and slow their run. Blood Rain knows the prey has stopped. Red Shadow cannot explain how he knows what he does — she cannot sense their prey at all. She does not question Blood Rain, she merely runs on with the pack.

A strange smell, lying across her path like a serpent, stops her. She nearly howls the Warning of Wyrm's Approach before checking herself. Instead, she growls softly to the other wolves, who stop and sniff at the ground.

The smell is a wolf marking its territory, but the smell is wrong. Instead of the bitter warning that a mark should give off, this scent almost beckons to the pack. It smells more like flower than wolf, and the cub shies away from it, nervously. Rush-of-Wind-Howl and Rain-Eyes, the Theurge, eye each other. Rain-Eyes growls to Blood Rain, "Taint here."

Red Shadow expects Blood Rain's eyes to fill with fury as they do in battle, but instead they look thoughtful, and the sight of human-thought in wolf-eyes makes Red Shadow shift a bit. "We have other prey tonight," he says. Red Shadow's wolf-heart speaks, and she follows it, whining. She knows the Litany and so do the others.

Blood Rain turns on her and nips her flank. She turns and lowers her head and tail, but growls to him, reminding him of their duty. The war is more important than the hunt, if the hunt is not part of the war. The other three Garou are silent, but hunch closer to Red Shadow. And Blood Rain, perhaps recognizing her wisdom, perhaps worried about breaking the Litany, turns his head in the direction of the scent. "Follow quickly, and find the taint. We will complete your hunt after."

The pack slips into the brush, quiet and graceful, and Red Shadow wonders what Blood Rain means in calling the hunt "hers." She isn't leading it; she doesn't even know what they are hunting. She succeeded on her Rite of Passage, which involved a hunt of sorts. This is the first time she has hunted with Blood Rain, true, but why should that make such a difference?

She reminds herself that she is but a cliath, not much more than a pup. And then she shakes off thought and listens to her wolf-heart. She might be in battle soon, and battle is no place for the human-mind.

The scent grows stronger and now, in addition to the sweet-wrong smell of whatever marked this trail, Red Shadow smells metal and heat. She whines and bares her teeth — something is nearby, and it is nothing of Gaia. She remembers a smell like this, something her packmates called a "bulldozer." But this is different, this smell comes from a live thing.

The other Garou in the pack sense this as well and begin to change to Hispo. Blood Rain runs ahead a short distance, while Rain-Eyes and Rush-of-Wind-Howl move to the sides. Red Shadow does not change form, but stays behind with the young Garou. She knows she is to do this; her wolf-heart speaks it clearly. The pup is not to be put in danger during this hunt.

From ahead she hears a cry of pain and then the smells change, from metal and sickness to hot blood. She feels Rage rise within her and the cub slinks back, but she barks at him and he stands still. She is not an alpha, but outranks him, and so he obeys. She has barely a second to ponder being a leader while the true leader is away when the creature attacks.

She did not hear or smell it coming, but she has no time to consider why. The creature is shaped like a wolf, but it is no cousin of hers. It slams into her side, rolling her over, and both of them land on the jutting roots of a tree. Red Shadow feels pain in her side, but it fades immediately as she takes on the Hispo.

The false-wolf backs up. It isn't as big as her Hispo body, but close. It looks like it might once have been a gray wolf, but now its fur is slick and black-green in places. It circles her, unafraid of the beast it faces. Its eyes don't show wolf-heart or human-mind. No thought behind those eyes, only pain and hunger. Red Shadow snaps at it, meaning to drive it back, to give herself some room, but the false-wolf lunges, biting her muzzle and holding on.

How this creature masked its scent before, Red Shadow does not know, but she can certainly smell it now. The false-wolf's scent is swamp water and dung, metal and afterbirth. It holds on to Red Shadow's muzzle and she feels the fox eat at her heart. Her human-mind drives the fox away — she has faced worse than this, and this creature will not frighten her simply because it wears the form of a wolf.

She sits back on her haunches and tosses her head. The false-wolf goes flying into a nearby tree with a sound of rabbit-bones between teeth. It stands too quickly and starts toward Red Shadow, limping, but not hurt. But Red Shadow has already leapt.

Her fangs meet around its throat, and she pulls back. The false-wolf collapses, blood staining the leaves and ground around it. Red Shadow barks a rebuke at the pup, who stood frightened while she fought.

The false-wolf's blood smells like its mark, sweet and wrong. It twitches once, dying, and Red Shadow howls from somewhere in her wolf-heart. She hears the other Garou approaching, but does not cut her howl short. She knows that this wolf was not always false, and it is that knowledge that spurs her to howl.

• • •

The prey has forgotten the wolves. Other prey — smaller animals like rabbits and squirrels — hear the howl and race for their burrows. But the wolves' prey does not hear. They do not fear. They do not hide. They are a different kind of prey, larger and stronger. Together with their herd, they are deaf to the howl from the forest.

The prey leaves the herd and begins to journey back to where they were. The fear they felt before is gone, and now they do not spare it a thought. They will find their chosen nesting place and sleep.

• • •

Blood Rain and the other Garou find Red Shadow howling. Blood Rain immediately silences her with a sharp growl. She stops howling, but does not back down. The heaviness she carries has not gone away, and when she sees the other Garou covered in blood that she knows came from more false wolves, it only grows worse. She whines to Rain-Eyes about the wolves, asking what they were, and he only responds that they were tainted.

Red Shadow knows that should be enough. It is not. She wants to know how they were tainted, but does not ask. The pack is running again. Blood Rain takes the lead and sets a harsh pace. Red Shadow keeps up easily, but the cub lags a few strides. He is not yet true Garou, since he has not undergone his Rite of Passage, and no matter how healthy, no matter how well-fed he might be, nothing changes the fact that this land is not his home. A Garou can adapt easily enough, wolf-heart changing as human-mind suggests, but that adaptation requires will, and he has not learned his purpose yet. He is still spurred by his wolf-heart, and all that his wolf-heart knows is that the alpha requires him to run. That motivation, while powerful, is not the same as the one guiding Red Shadow and the other Garou. Red Shadow is not sure why Blood Rain saw fit to bring him, but she does not ask.

New smells on the breeze cause Red Shadow's hackles to rise. The stink of human-road — hot even at night — mixed with the not-unpleasant carrion smell of decay. Red Shadow knows that where human-roads scar the land, easy prey can be found in times of hunger. But she also knows that prey living too close to such a road gain an odd flavor to their meat, as though the road saturates them somehow. She caught and killed a rabbit near a road once. She choked on the meat, the odd texture coating her tongue and causing her teeth to ache. It wasn't until some time later when she rode, grudgingly, in a human-car that she identified the taste. Poison, oil, rubber — the road is all this and worse.

Blood Rain leaves the woods and growls for the others to stay. A moment later he returns, bidding them to follow. The five wolves set off in a new direction, running in a ditch next to the human road. Red Shadow hears a soft hiss and smells fumes — a car approaching. Harsh, white light washes over the wolves, but neither they nor the car slows. The wolves are below the light's notice, and on they run.

The ground beneath Red Shadow's paws is soft and muddy, not unlike the swamp. The smell of the

water is much the same, but a tinge of oil — likely from the road — mingles with the swamp-smell. From somewhere up ahead a car bleats a pathetic mockery of a howl, and Red Shadow thinks again, *this is no place for a wolf.*

• • •

The prey return to their nesting grounds, and bustle about preparing for sleep. They arrange their nests, they pass waste. They cannot smell what the wolves do — the greedy swamp only yards away as they defecate. The swamp is not choosy. The swamp takes what nourishment it is given, and if that nourishment befouls it, the swamp cannot tell the difference.

• • •

The smell changes again. The road ends and the oil-scent leaves the water, replaced by a pungent, thick odor of waste. Red Shadow recognizes it as human, as does the cub, who backs off, wary. A snarl from Blood Rain keeps him moving.

The wolves climb up the sides of the ditch. Now that the road has ended, they have no reason to run along the ditch floor. Red Shadow is glad for this; she already carries the swamp-water scent and has no desire to smell of human dung as well.

The pack runs on, slower now. Blood Rain seems unsure of his path, and stops often to find the trail. The thought that he might not be able to pick it up again crosses Red Shadow's human-mind, and wish/hunger echoes in her wolf-heart. She wants to go, if not home to the forest of her birth, then at least back to the sept. But she dares not breathe this to Blood Rain, as he would see it as a challenge. So she waits until he finds the trail, and the wolves run on.

They move away from the ditch, and the smell of waste grows stronger. Rain-Eyes barks softly to the others and nods to the ground — wolf tracks. Blood Rain nods to him and to Red Shadow, and the two Garou follow the paw prints into the brush. They will find Blood Rain again after they discover where the tracks lead, Red Shadow's wolf-heart confirms.

Red Shadow had expected the waste-stench to grow weaker since she was not following Blood Rain's chosen trail, but instead it grows worse. The smell reaches up around the Garou, penetrates their noses and fills their mouths and lungs. Rain-Eyes coughs and shakes his head again and again, trying to clear it. Red Shadow knows that he has never been to a human-place. She has, and doesn't bother trying to expel the scent. Human-made smells don't fade easily; the only choices are to endure them or to change to human form herself. She will not change to human form while on a hunt, so she endures.

The wolf tracks lead in a circle and in the direction of the ditch. The ground grows black and pulpy, much like the floor of the ditch, and Red Shadow hopes they will not have to run beside the road again. But the trail veers off and the stench worsens. Something in the clearing up ahead is causing the smell. Red Shadow brushes Rain-Eyes to ask if he smells taint, but he cannot smell anything at all. Red Shadow bids him stay back, and goes on to the clearing alone.

• • •

The prey sleeps. They do not dream of polluting the swamp or the forest. They do not dream of Wyrm, Wyld, or Weaver. What they dream of is their own concern. Since they will not dream again tomorrow night, however, one might hope their dreams are pleasant. The pack is coming for them.

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In the clearing is a pond. The water isn't stagnant — Red Shadow can hear water falling or splashing from somewhere — but it smells worse than standing water. The wolf prints go up to the edge of the water, and Red Shadow follows them, knowing that no 'gator could survive in this fetid pool.

The water is murky, even at night, but Red Shadow knows that it isn't algae or mud. She backs off in disgust. She looks across the pond, trying to see the other side, but she can't tell where the bank begins and the black water ends. Insects buzz over her head and try to burrow into her fur. She snaps at them, wondering if she should howl to summon the others — this despoliation of Gaia is surely more important than their hunt?

Her wolf-heart rouses an alarm within her and she jumps, looking around for danger. She sees and hears nothing but the flies. She turns around in a circle and growls to Rain-Eyes. She hears a choked growl in return. What startled her? Everything is so quiet....

She cannot even hear the pond anymore. But when she first approached it, she heard a sound like water splashing or a creek babbling.

Or a wolf drinking.

The wolf isn't infected in the same way the one she killed earlier was. This one is already dying. Perhaps it has had its run of strength and rage, and now the poison is eating what is left. It walks like a newborn fawn, on stiff legs. Its muzzle is caked black from the pond, and its entire coat is the same black-green color that the stronger one's was in patches. It lurches toward Red Shadow, snapping at her, nothing but pain and hunger in its eyes. Not hunger, realizes Red Shadow, thirst. The poor creature thirsts for pure water but cannot walk far enough to find it.

Red Shadow doesn't even need to change shape to kill the wolf. She tears out its throat and sits next to it wondering, even though the wolf isn't prey, if she should thank its spirit. Her wolf-heart is silent, but her human-mind thinks something should be done for the wolf. Red Shadow does not know the Rite of Cleansing. Perhaps Rain-Eyes does.

She walks away from the pond to find Blood Rain and the rest of the pack waiting with Rain-Eyes. She starts to tell Blood Rain what she saw, but he knows. That is why he took her on this hunt. He licks her muzzle and nods off into the brush, and she knows that there are the creatures responsible for the poison. And that is why this hunt is so important. The hunt is a test, and it is not over yet.

The wolves have a long run back when the hunt is over, but now they run with rage. Even the cub feels the urgency, though he might not know the reason for it. And although Blood Rain leads the pack, Red Shadow keeps pace with him.

• • •

The youngest of the prey gets up from the nest and stumbles to the place where the prey passes waste. It doesn't know the wolves are coming. It is still half-asleep.

• • •

The alpha of Red Shadow's pack — her true pack — is a human-born Galliard. Red Shadow listens to her stories, but her strange way of speaking, even in the Garou tongue, makes it difficult. Her tales are often of far-off places shrouded in mist and of great Garou heroes battling monsters and Wyrm-beasts that defy human-mind. Her descriptions are vivid enough to cause her wolf-heart to send alarms and sometimes during the stories, Red Shadow finds herself growling, as though one of the beasts might leap from the trees at any moment.

As the pack bursts from the clearing, Red Shadow feels her wolf-heart question what her eyes and nose tell her.

She sees a human-car, but not running — it is cold and dead. Two pointed domes, colored in a way that her wolf-eyes can't quite make out, are staked to the ground near a fire pit. One of them is open and Red Shadow sees a human-cub sleeping, but smells another nearby.

Blood Rain does not waste time. He takes on the war-form and tears the still-closed dome from the ground. Two humans, a male and a bitch, sit up, their human-minds rebelling against what their human-hearts remember. Blood Rain is a Full-Moon, a warrior, and he does not allow them the time to figure out

what they are seeing. His claws come flashing down, and the bitch keels over, most of her throat gone.

The male stands to run, but the cub brings him down. He attacks hesitantly, but Rush-of-Wind-Howl urges him on. Red Shadow stands dumbly. She knows that wolves, even Kin wolves, do not attack humans but fear them. Her human-mind suggests that Blood Rain is trying to teach the pup *not* to fear, but to protect himself. Her wolf-heart feels oddly sickened at that, but she does know why.

Rain-Eyes nudges her towards a wooden rectangle nearby. From inside, she smells waste and, subtly underneath, the fourth human. Red Shadow runs off, taking on the war-form as she does. Dimly, she hears the human-cub screaming, briefly, before Rain-Eyes reaches him.

Red Shadow understands doors, though it took some practice. She opens this one and finds a human bitch-cub sitting over a pit. From below she smells waste and swamp water, and feels rage rise.

The human-cub looks up and its eyes grow wide. Its mouth opens, but it does not make a sound.

In Crinos form, Red Shadow can see some color. The covering the human-child wears is a red-orange color. Red Shadow recognizes it.

"Sun dress," she says, the human words tearing themselves from her half-wolf throat.

The human child only whimpers. Red Shadow's jaws snap forward. She has no wish to prolong pain. Her wolf-heart tells her to kill quickly. Her human-mind is strangely silent.

• • •

The prey's cooling bodies lay in the wreckage of their nests. The wolves circle the wooden building that covers the pit, and enact a rite to cleanse it. On the way back to the sept, they do the same to the pond that has been fouled by the prey's waste.

If every wolf rose up, thinks Red Shadow, every wolf and every Garou, could we cull them all? Could we cull enough so that their waste wouldn't fill entire pits and seep through the ground into the swamp? She knows Blood Rain thinks so, and so does not ask. She peers out into the swamp, wondering how many humans must be culled before they stop fouling the earth.

She neither hears nor smells answers, only the swamp.

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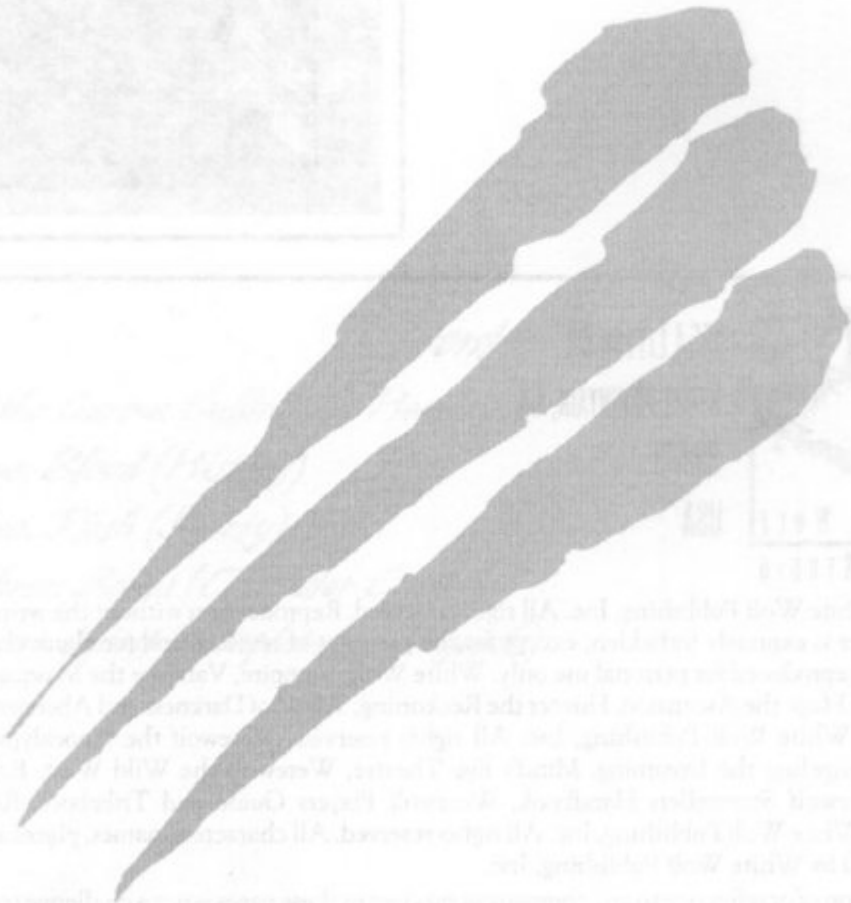

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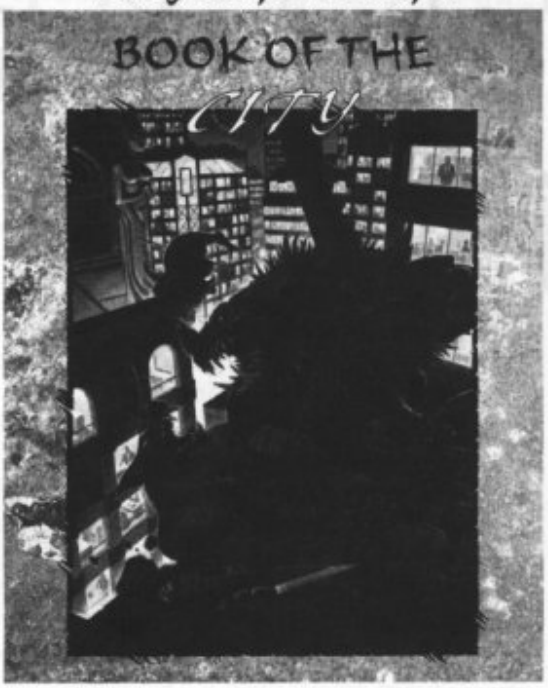

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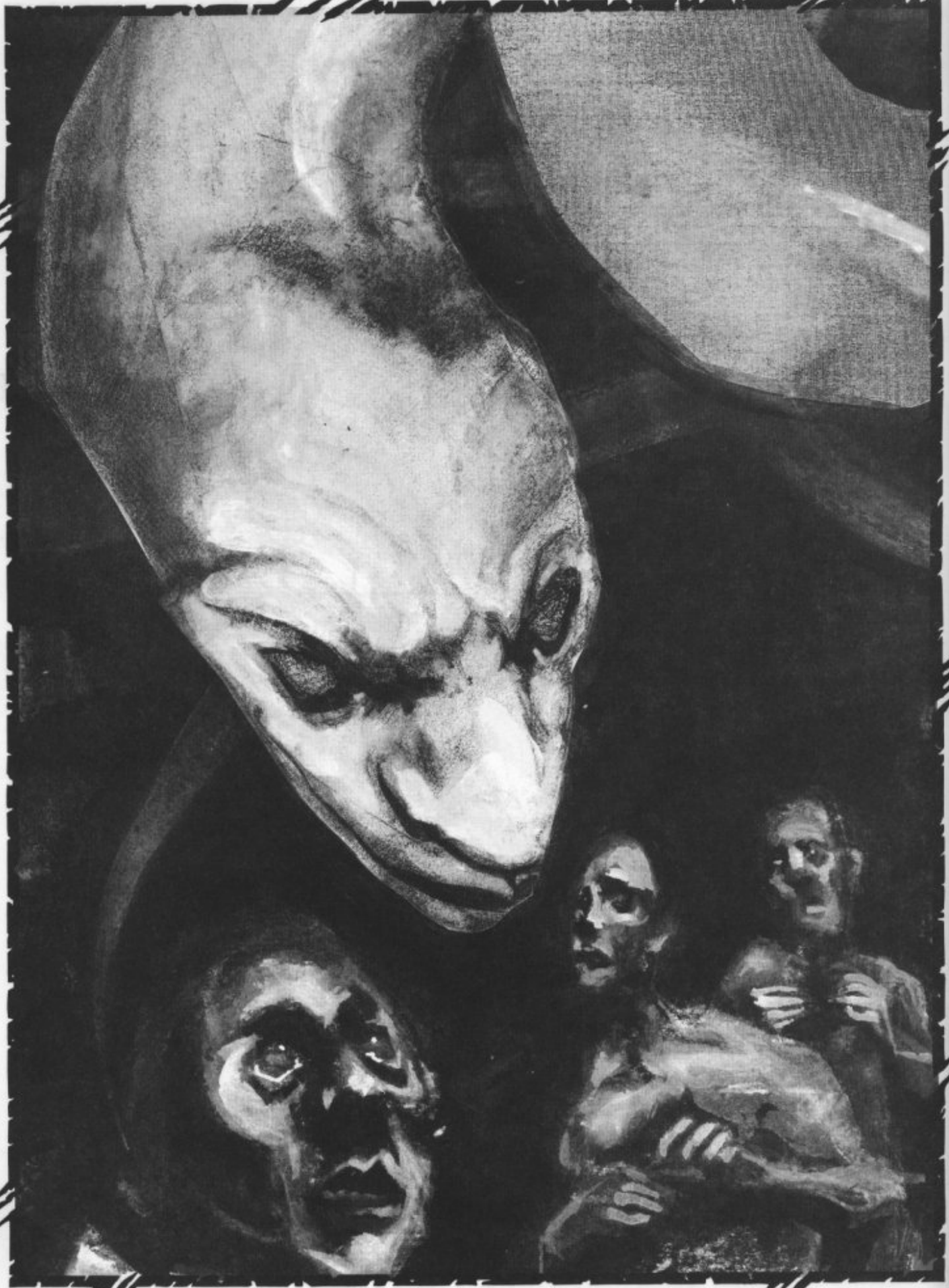


Chapter One: Blood

"The evolution of the human race will not be accomplished in the ten thousand years of tame animals, but in the millions of years of wild animals, because man is and always will be a wild animal."

— Charles Darwin, *The Next Ten Million Years*

Moonlight shines down on the caern and the forest from one tiny sliver. Tomorrow, no moonlight will shine at all. Tonight is the last night of the crescent moon and a special rite is taking place. Tonight the contagion will be erased and land reclaimed. But the rite won't begin for some time yet, as it has to be timed so that the climax coincides with the moon setting and the sunrise. And so, in the Glyph-Circle, sap and bark scents mingle with the rich odor of blood on teeth, of water on fur. The Red Talons gather to pass time until Sunrise-Heart can begin the rite.

The sept is one of the few left that belongs only to the Talons. They know, or have been told, that some time ago the Talons had many caerns that they tended to and hunted from. They gather in the Glyph-Circle and listen to the Galliards howl of wolves and deeds that happened before.

The first howl rises up above the trees and others join in, telling the story along with the Galliards or adding details to make the story different this time. The Garou do not know if the events in these stories ever really happened. They were not there, after all. But these stories have been told down through the ages, parent to cub, ancestor to descendant. It does not occur to the Talons that they might simply be fables. Red Talons do not tell stories for mere entertainment.

One Talon, a Galliard called Silent, does not howl. Before his First Change, a trap left him unable to howl, bark, or make any other sound. When he tells stories, he does so with body language. When the others howl, he only listens, eyes shut, seeing the world as it was when the stories took place.

Primeval

When the world was Forest and Ocean and Plains, before City or Road, there were no animals. Gaia called up the plants and the rocks and the winds, and each of them found a mother in the Triat.

The Weaver looked at the rocks and settled into them. The Wyrm rode on the winds. But the Wyld bound itself up in the plants, and there the trouble began.

Plants

The plants began to grow larger and faster. Moss covered the rocks that the Weaver so loved, and they began to shift uncomfortably. Plants shed spores that rode on the wind, the Wyrm spun the winds into storms to shake them loose. But nothing deterred them from growth, and the Wyld could not stop them. Plants grew on and the world became green. They covered

the Ocean and the Rivers, the winds were choked with spores and leaves, and no sunlight touched the ground as the trees and grasses soaked it up greedily.

Gaia grew cold. The rocks beneath Her rumbled in displeasure and storms raged above Her, but the Wyld was nowhere to be found. The Wyld let the plants do as they wished, but all they knew was what the Wyld taught them — how to grow.

Finally, Gaia became tired of being cold and enduring the ground-shaking complaints of the Weaver and the sky-rending wails of the Wyrm, and She warned the Wyld that if the plants would not stop covering *everything*, She would bring something forth to control them.

The Wyld did not answer.

Animals

So Gaia brought forth animals. She brought forth a multitude to feed on the plants. Some were huge to reach the tallest trees, some tiny to eat the smallest blades of grass. Some flew to swallow up the spores in the air. Some swam the Ocean and Rivers to eat the green plants that grew on the surface, and some never surfaced at all and ate the plants growing the Ocean's floor. Some scoured the rocks eating the mosses and some took shelter in the Forests, chewing on the bark.

And the Weaver and the Wyrm looked at these creatures — and were not pleased. Now, instead of moss covering the stones and the mountains, the Weaver found animals sitting there, looking for food. The animals rode the Wyrm's winds to catch spores. The world was now even more chaotic than it had been, and moved much more quickly, as the animals bred and ate and died. And then Gaia, the Weaver, and the Wyrm realized — the Wyld had bound itself up into animals as well as plants.

Gaia asked the Wyld to stop, that the animals were breeding out of control, and that soon all the plants would be gone, leaving nothing but bare earth and empty water. She offered to speak with the Weaver and the Wyrm and make them stop shaking the Earth and rending the skies so that animals and plants could live and grow.

But the Wyld did not answer.

Predators

So Gaia brought forth more animals, but these She did not fashion to eat plants. These animals she fashioned to eat other animals. And unlike the first group of animals She created, She did not simply release these new beasts. Before letting them go, She granted them a gift from the Wyrm and the Weaver.

From the Wyrm they learned cunning. Eating grass didn't require thought or guile, but hunting down animals would, and so the Wyrm taught them to plan and think.

From the Weaver, they learned patience. Eating leaves required only the leaves to grow from the trees, but hunting down animals meant waiting for the animals to come close, and so the Weaver taught them how to wait.

And as they were animals, these new creatures already had the Wyld's gift of growth. The Wyld thought these creatures would eat the animals just as the animals had eaten the grass, leaving nothing behind — but they did not. These new animals — *predators* — had gifts from the Weaver and the Wyrm as well as the Wyld, and so were balanced. They had not only hunger, but also understanding.

They spread out over the world. Like the plants and animals before, the predators were varied. Some swam the Oceans and Rivers, some flew in the skies, some stalked the forests, some climbed the rocks. The first animals — *prey* — learned to gather in groups and to watch for predators, but never quite learned how to stop breeding, so the predators always had enough to eat.

The Weaver and the Wyrm weren't completely happy, but they agreed that things were better now that both the plants and the prey were being controlled. And even the Wyld (though it never said it aloud) admired the predator above all other life, since it grew and changed but did not bow before anything. And the Earth stopped shaking and the skies knit, and the cycle continued for some time.

Collapse

The Weaver and the Wyrm were not friends. The Weaver stood firm, wishing for the stones and the Earth to be eternal, while the Wyrm relished the power of blowing down even the tallest trees and longed to be able to topple the mountains. It took time, but eventually they fought. When they did, everything changed.

The prey ran and hid, but most died as the Earth and the skies fought. The predators, as their food began to die, called on their gifts from the two combatants, found places to hide, and waited. They hid in the places between the Oceans and the land, as the Ocean refused to be caught between the Weaver and Wyrm. As they waited, they changed. Many of them grew smaller, in order to hide. Many grew faster, to escape from the battles. The predators were not proud. Part of their gift was knowing that not all battles can be won, and they found no shame in running from another, stronger predator or a full herd of prey. They did not take part in the battle. They merely waited for Gaia to take a hand.

Gaia could not end this battle by bringing forth any new animals or beings. She did the only thing She could — She threatened to end everything. She would simply drift apart, She said, and then there would be no more rocks and no more winds. She would rather become nothing, She said, than watch the balance She had finally wrought crumble around Her.

The Weaver and the Wyrm stopped fighting and heeded Her threat. The Weaver settled back into the rocks and Wyrm swirled up again into the winds, each realizing — so they said — that one could never conquer the other. The surviving prey crept out into the world, eating what plants were left, growing slowly as the world rebuilt itself. The predators crept out again, many of them smaller from hiding, but still able to hunt and eat the prey.

But the Wyrm kept thinking and finally came to a decision. It sensed that Gaia was not serious in Her threat — even the chaos of the war hadn't been so great as to make Her break Herself apart. Even if She did so, however, the Wyrm was wind — and how could wind ever be destroyed? If the Wyrm could create chaos great enough to drive Gaia to frustration, Gaia would break Herself to pieces, and all that would be left was space and wind — and therefore the Wyrm.

Some time ago, the Wyrm decided to drive Gaia to madness.

Imbalance

The Wyrm's quest for destruction began long before the other tribes believe it did. In their quest to understand time, they have forgotten that measurements of sunsets and moonrises mean nothing to the Triat. The Wyrm's descent likely started when the Wyrm came into being.

Whenever it was that the Wyrm embarked on its task, it rode the winds and scoured the entire Earth, looking over each and every one of the creatures and plants that flourished there. It couldn't act directly, but it knew the value of small actions over time. Wind and pressure and water can change an open plain into a canyon, given time. So it looked over the world for its tools, the perfect instruments of slow, deliberate destruction.

It immediately discounted the predators. The predators knew balance, and knew that if they killed too many of a prey animal, no more would breed. It also decided that plants, while they were perfect in their ability to adapt and spread, were ultimately too weak to wreak the destruction the Wyrm required in order to drive Gaia mad. The Wyrm's tools would have to come from prey.

The Wyrm's Choice

Some time ago, humans were not the savage, bloodthirsty animals they are today. When the world was young, they were prey, and ate only fruits and leaves and moss. They banded together in herds — much as they do now — but if even a single wolf approached them, they would flee. Predators of many stripes made meals of them — great birds would swoop down to carry them off, packs of dire wolves would run down the slowest. The predators had to pay special attention to humans, for although they don't breed as fast as rats and rabbits, they do breed all year round, and so even with so many predators feeding on them, their numbers dwindled little.

They were weak when compared to the mighty serpents, slow next to the wolves, and clumsy up against the great cats. They could swim, but not well enough to avoid the mighty beasts of the Rivers and Oceans. They could climb, but not fast enough to avoid the creatures of the Forests and Jungles. And so what the Wyrm knew that led it to choose humans as its tools, who can say? The Wyrm's choice, however, was horribly astute.

The Wyrm Shows Humans the Truth

One morning, some time ago, a herd of humans cowered together under a tree. A great serpent had just carried one of them away, and the others huddled together, afraid that the beast would return if they moved.

As they waited, the Wyrm arrived, riding on a gust of cold wind, and saw the helpless prey. It took the form of the serpent, and wound itself around the tree under which they sat. And it whispered to them of the true nature of balance.

Had the Wyrm said anything else, it might not have mattered. Whatever lies it could have hatched would have been *lies*, after all, and the humans could not have used falsehoods to rise so far. But it told them the truth — that they were prey only because they fed on plants and not other animals. If they began to feed on prey, they would grow stronger and faster, and then they could claim territory like other predators. They would be safe and warm, like the predators were, and would not have to fear being carried away and devoured.

The humans listened, rapt and silent beneath the tree, too terrified of the serpent to move or disagree. Likely they would have forgotten everything the Wyrm said if it had simply let them go. But just then, a deer wandered too close and the Wyrm-serpent lashed out and killed it, and bade the humans eat of his offering, that they might grow strong.

And out of fear for their own lives, the humans ate of the prey's flesh and drank its blood. And they knew that the serpent had told them the truth.

The World Changes

The unthinkable had happened — prey had become predator. The Weaver looked on in terror and disgust, for it was unsuited to handle such great change. Gaia understood that something had helped the humans become predators, but was unwilling to destroy them. She thought that the humans would understand balance as predators do. She thought that they would stop breeding so much, that they would feed on prey and that they would live in small families or alone, as predators do. Of course, Gaia was mistaken.

The humans flocked to the forest where the Wyrm had taught the first of them about balance. For some time, that forest was quiet. And then, slowly, predators started leaving. First the great cats that lazed about on the tree branches stalked out from the shadows and the brush, and bounded off to other places. Then the wolves left the forest to hunt their prey on the plains. Finally, the great serpent (the *true* serpent, for the Wyrm had long since returned to the wind) emerged, and Gaia, curious, asked why the predators were leaving that forest. The serpent told Her that there was no prey left; the humans had eaten it all.

Indeed, not long after the last of the predators left the forest, the humans emerged. But they were different than the soft, weak prey that had entered the trees some time ago. They were still weak on their own. They still lacked fur — but they had made their own by skinning prey and stealing their coats. They still lacked claws — but they had taken antlers from the deer and used them to slaughter prey. They were still slow and clumsy, but now they traveled in a great pack. For no matter how intelligent the humans were, no matter how much they had learned, they had not then nor have they yet learned about balance. They kept breeding, over and over, and the forest could no longer hold them. They had eaten the prey there, and now they meant to move on.

Gaia was afraid and troubled — but not yet ready to drift apart forever. She would have to be put through much more misery before She came to that. But the humans did not disappoint the Wyrm.

Patience and Cunning

The Weaver taught predators of patience, the Wyrm taught them of cunning. But humans were false predators. They became predators only because of the Wyrm's whispers, and so never received the Weaver's gifts. And so they have never been patient, but wish to eat, to breed, to kill *now*. And this is what the Wyrm loved about them.

The humans banded together in huge herds, not small families. They wished to feed their young *now*, so rather than patiently hunt down prey, taking care to leave some alive to breed, they slaughtered whatever they could find. They drove great herds of animals off cliffs, and then left most of the herd to rot, taking only a tiny part to feed and clothe their herds. They trapped small prey in their dens and killed the ones who ran, meaning that the young left behind would starve. All predators kill, and there is nothing wrong with killing. But humans, somewhere along the way, began to look at killing as a need, like eating and breeding. And however dangerous they were before, when they began to lust for blood for blood's sake, they became a thousand-fold worse.

Blood or Life?

Silent hears a new howl and recognizes it as belonging to Fire-Friend, an Ahroun who has ventured out of the woods and fought with dead-but-walking creatures:

Some of these humans split off from the herd one night and sat together. They spoke and decided that they should be like spiders, drinking only the fluids of their prey. They loved blood more than food, breeding, life, or anything, and they decided that their lives would become nothing but a hunt for blood.

In years to come, they followed the hunt so closely that they did not notice when their bodies died and their souls left them behind. They did not notice when Gaia looked on them in horror and vowed to take every safe haven on Earth from them. They followed their hunt and drank the blood of prey, and after they finally realized that they were only safe when hidden from both the sun *and* living creatures, they began to feed on the blood of their former fellows. And they were so adept at hiding that their fellows still deny their existence, although they do fear these blood-drinkers.

The Wyrm does not care about such blood-drinkers; they do nothing to speed Gaia's collapse. But the Weaver loves them, for when their bodies died, they also ceased to change, which gives the Weaver comfort. Garou who say the undead are servants of the Wyrm are wrong — they make evils to serve only themselves, but they are favored by the Weaver.

The First Murder

The humans had learned to kill for other reasons than survival. Some humans felt that a young male human had to kill something larger than itself to be considered ready to mate. Others simply enjoyed the act of seeing another animal die. The predators of the world watched in horror, some no longer willing to feed on humans. Their meat had become tough and strange-tasting, and they kept so close to their herds that many predators did not feel it was safe to hunt them any longer.

Prey animals have always resorted to trickery when frightened. Some swell up, some are colored to look like predators. Humans were and are prey animals, and are skilled in this kind of trickery. Instead of false coloring or size, however, they used their numbers to conceal their weakness. It worked — had the predators of the world continued to feed on humans, perhaps the world would be different now. But the predators, unsure whether or not the humans were still prey, shied away.

All except the wolves.

The great wolves felt that humans might be somewhat like them. After all, they lived in packs and cared for their young. They spoke with each other, just as wolves do. Perhaps the wolves and the humans could share territory? Perhaps the wolves could teach the humans about breeding?

The wolves did not know then what we know now. No one, not Gaia or any creature under Her, can teach humans anything. Any lesson they are given, any gift of Earth they find, they test and stretch to destruction and then blame each other for its loss. No matter what threat is attached to a truth, no matter how compelling the evidence, the humans cannot escape the fact that they are prey, and do not have the cunning or instinct they should.

One night, a wolf left her pack to enter the human herd. She knew this was a risk — no predator welcomes another to its territory, and no prey will tolerate the presence of a predator quietly. But quietly and stealthily, she moved among the humans, watching them. What she saw there was fascinating... and terrifying.

The humans had built huge mounds of earth, altering the very ground around them. They did not live in these mounds, however. They had built them to house their dead. The wolf wandered around the mounds and realized that, if viewed all at once, the mounds would run together and resemble a serpent.

At that, the humans awoke to find the wolf among them. She ran, but they chased her with their false claws. They chased her until they were far out of their territory. They chased her until she was tired and could run no more, and then they slew her and took her skin.

Other predators saw what had happened, and knew that the world had changed again. The humans — prey-turned-predator — had not only slain another predator, but also hunted it down like prey. The world unbalanced a bit more, and Gaia wept and lamented. She decided that She needed help to keep the world in balance, and She knew then that humans were going to cause Her problems forever. And yet She let them live, unwilling to wipe out even the worst of Her creations.

Gaia Assigns Tasks

Some time ago, after the First Murder but before the First War, Gaia decided that She needed help to make the world balanced. And so She called together the predators of the world and gave them tasks, beyond simply eating, breeding, and culling the herds.

Of the weaker predators — the bats and birds — She asked only that they watch and report to their larger fellows anything of importance. Of the lizards, many of whom had escaped to the Oceans when the Weaver and the Wyrm had nearly destroyed the world, She asked to remember anything important. Other

predators had tasks, as well, but they have since abandoned them and some, like the first bulls, became prey as punishment. Gaia ignored the serpents, as She was afraid the Wyrm might impersonate them again and confuse Her other children, but they were jealous and so tried to assign themselves a task — they, too, failed.

When Gaia came to the wolves, She gave them a special task in recognition of their bravery and loss in the First Murder. They were to defend Her from anything that meant to destroy or harm Her. The great wolves were excited at this — it meant, they believed, that they would be required to destroy the humans entirely. After all, the humans were despoiling the world and upsetting balance; surely it would be better if they were gone, or at least made prey again. But the Wyrm stepped in before the wolves could go to work and saved his chosen race.

The Wyrm Tricks Gaia

As the predators of the world adapted to their new tasks, Gaia felt secure that balance would be restored. But then the Wyrm came to Her and reminded Her that She had not assigned a task to the humans, who were, after all, predators. How were they to learn of balance, the Wyrm asked, without taking part in that balance? How could they even be expected to learn about it?

Gaia agreed, but had no other tasks that needed fulfilling. And so the Wyrm made another suggestion — that Gaia allow the other predators to take the form of humans and to breed with them. That way, the Wyrm said, the predators could teach humans about balance, and the humans could help *all* of Gaia's chosen.

Gaia considered, and then agreed. She went to each of the predators in turn and granted them the power to change into humans, and bade them go among them and breed. And most of the predators did so, thus sealing their fate. Even wolves bred with humans, forgetting all about the injustice they had suffered in the First Murder.

And the Wyrm laughed and laughed, for now each one of the predators assigned to keep balance now had a human mind as well as the heart of a true predator. The Wyrm knew it had won; all it needed to do now was wait.

The First War

The predators did their jobs as well as they could, but now that they had human-minds, they couldn't help behaving somewhat like humans. They gathered together into groups like the humans that they favored, and they adopted rites and practices based on the trappings that humans had invented. Meanwhile, the humans banded together and discovered things about the world.

Dissenting Howls

Silent listens to the story of the how shape-shifters came to be and then hears snarls and barking from behind him. Several other wolves howl, loudly, this version of the story:

Gaia was not tricked by the Wyrm at all! The power to change into humans wasn't a gift from Her at all æ it came directly from the Wyrm. The Wyrm saw that, with each of the predators working towards balance and with the great wolves ready to slay the humans, his chosen race would not be long for the world. He infected human blood with a strange curse—any predator who bit a cursed human changed into a human. Over time, of course, the predators learned to control it, but that didn't stop some of their pups from growing up to become shapeshifters.

It took many years for predators to conceive of *breeding* with humans, but surely that notion came from the Wyrm as well. Gaia would never have guided us to such a disastrous choice!

They found that they could make fire, and they used it to drive away any natural predators who still wished to feed on them. They found that they could break the wills of some animals, and kept them close until the time came to eat them. Even the great wolves were not immune, and humans took the smallest wolves in and broke them, so that the wolves looked at the humans as their pack, and fought against anything that came to harm the humans.

The humans found that they could alter the way that plants grew and broke even the plants' cycle of growth, bending them to their needs. They began to build homes around their huge fields of plants, and when the great wolves came at night to do their work, they began to build walls, as well.

And so a great many packs of wolves — some that could choose to change into humans and some that could not — came together. These wolves all believed in the task that Gaia had given them and wished to see the humans destroyed and the balance restored, and none of them had sullied themselves by breeding with the humans. The time had come, they decided, to wipe the humans out.

Other tribes now call this the Impergium, but the Red Talons know the truth of the First War. It was not an attempt to reduce the humans' numbers and keep them to their settlements, nor was it born of anger or revenge — at least, not at first. The First War was to be the act that restored the world to balance, and make the tasks that Gaia saddled us with unnecessary. But, of course, that did not happen.

The wolves went on the hunt and, when they reached the first cluster of human-homes, they took on the forms of war that Gaia had given them and advanced. But as they watched, a human came towards them from the village and changed into a silver-white wolf. The wolf bade them stop and asked what they were doing.

The great wolves said that they were coming to destroy the humans once and for all.

The silver wolf snarled in horror and rage, and said that *these* humans were under his protection, for he bred with them and protected them. He would make sure they did not grow too numerous, but it would be wrong to kill them. After all, with one of Gaia's chosen as their teacher and patron, they would never menace Gaia.

And because the great wolves did not understand then, as we do now, the nature of humans, they believed the white wolf, and they ran on.

At the next village, high in the mountains, a black wolf approached them as they descended, howling, on a village. He said the same thing that the white wolf did; he was the protector and alpha here. He showed the wolves how only the strongest humans were allowed to survive in his domain, and the wolves accepted this and ran on.

We have no way to know how many villages had Garou protectors. Some did not, and the wolves destroyed them. Some had no Garou, but other predators had laid claim to the inhabitants. After some time, the wolves, tired and hungry, laid down together in a valley to sleep.

While they slept, one of them — called Looks-Sideways — had a strange dream. Rather than the shadowy dreams of prey and running that most wolves dream, he instead saw visions in his head as humans do. He saw a great human-hive, full of humans yowling and preying on each other, but unable to escape. Outside the hive were predators of all kinds, prowling the edges of the hive but unable to enter.

When Looks-Sideways awakened, he knew the truth — no matter the best intentions, humans would not stop breeding, and so the wolves would have to continue the First War, no matter what. He told the alphas of his dream, and they listened, and decided that rather than risk fighting with other Garou, the wolves would instead send a small pack into a village to kill a few humans when they grew too numerous. This is the part of the Impergium that the other tribes remember, and indeed they even claim that they were a part of it. But at the beginning of it, there were no tribes, only the

wolves that knew the truth in their wolf-hearts, and the wolves that tried to find truth in the human-minds.

The First War Ends

The First War — the Impergium — went on for some time. We culled the humans, never breeding with them, only taking their form out of curiosity or necessity. But other Garou did breed with them. Gradually, over the course of the First War, we began to understand what that was doing to them. A Garou born human grows up with a human-mind, but no wolf-heart. The wolf-heart is natural, innate, but the human-mind can be learned. Therefore, human-born Garou are weaker than wolf-born, and always have been. But many Garou had been seduced by human ways, their words and language, their strange practices, their harsh songs. And finally, the human-borns decided that the First War had to end.

Over the time of the First War, the tribes had formed around the humans. Different Garou had bred with specific humans and the wolves had come to trust that those Garou would cull their humans' numbers (which happened, sometimes). The largest and strongest of the tribes, the Silver Fangs, called a great moot. Every Garou on Earth attended. There, the Silver Fangs announced that the Impergium was ended and that there would be a Litany for all Garou. For a tenet to be included in this Litany, all of the tribes had to agree on it. And so the Garou began to decide on the tenets.

But our vote was never counted. The great wolves were not a tribe, and did not act as one. All of the other Garou assumed that we were wolf-born of some far off tribe, and did not notice when we did not vote.

It took some time, but finally the tribes decided upon the Litany and bade each of the tribes take it back to their homes and teach their cubs of it. It was then that the strongest of us, the great wolves, a mighty Full Moon called Fells-Trees, bellowed to be heard. He asked why the wolves were never asked for a vote, and how the humans would be controlled now that the Impergium was ended.

The Silver Fangs responded that they did not know the great wolves were a tribe, otherwise they would have surely been given a vote, and asked Fells-Trees what the name of the tribe was. Fells-Trees responded that a name was not important, and asked again how the humans would be controlled.

The Silver Fang rulers said that without a name for the tribe, the Garou would not recognize the great wolves, and would consider them simply a pack of scattered marauders. And Fells-Trees raged and lashed out at the Silver Fang ruler with his claws, leaving a bloody swath of claw marks across his chest. The ruler fell back in pain and alarm, and Fells-Trees howled that there, now and forever, was the name of his people, and that they would await the answer to the question of controlling the humans in their hunting grounds.

The bloody swath on the ruler's chest is and remains the symbol of our tribe. After seeing that, each of the other tribes decided they had to have a glyph to represent them, and over time have invented glyphs for nearly everything under Gaia. But we were to first to use the glyphs, purely by accident.

Fells-Trees and the wolves returned to their hunting grounds, but did not pursue the Impergium. Although he had raged against the Silver Fang alpha, his wolf-heart recognized that the Silver Fang was stronger than he, and he would abide by his rules. And so the Red Talons did not continue the Impergium, but only killed humans when they wandered too close to a den or when they tried to prey on the wolves' chosen herds.

Time passed, and the wolves waited, but never did learn the answer to the question: How to keep the humans under control without killing them? They question stands to this day, and no other tribe, not the mighty Silver Fangs, the clever Shadow Lords, or the gentle Children of Gaia have answered it.

Human-Time Begins

Wolves have no need of time, but humans do. They are afraid and insecure, so they must measure everything, count every leaf on every tree, because they feel it gives them more control. They had no control during the Impergium, so they forgot it, and all that came before it. Today's humans have no idea they were ever prey. They do not remember the serpent that told them the truth.

Time

Silent has heard the story of Fells-Trees before, of course, since the very sept is named for him. He wanders toward the outward edge of the Glyph-Circle and listens to Black-Paws, a Half-Moon, instructing a cub:

We have no glyph for "time," and never will. Wolves do not understand that time passes, nor that things happen in time. They only understand what happens now. Now it is time to mate, to feed, to fight, to run. Tomorrow, if there is such a thing, it may be time for all of that and more, but if we think ahead to tomorrow, we forget about mating, eating, fighting, or running *now*. We do not try to guess how long ago something happened. Perhaps it happened a day ago or a lifetime ago. If it was important, when it happened does not matter.

So there is no glyph for time, as we have no need of it.

But after the Impergium ended, they began to mark time and keep histories. This would prove to have consequences we never would have imagined. But some time after the Impergium ended, we found ourselves in a different kind of war. This one was not one we fought because of our wolf-hearts. It was because of our human-minds, and bears that mark of folly.

The War of Rage

Where the Silver Fangs had ended one war, they began another. The War of Rage began long before the Red Talons became involved. It first came to us in the form of Grimr the Bear-Slayer, a mighty Fenrir whom our packs simply called Greycoat.

Some time after the Impergium ended and the Litany handed down, when Fells-Trees had wandered into the woods to die in peace, and his cubs had become alphas of packs, Greycoat came to our lands. The Talons obeyed the Litany that the tribes decided upon for the most part, but some of the tenets made no sense to us, and since we were never given a vote, we chose not to follow them. The Silver Fangs had heard of such "transgressions," heard of our tribe slaughtering and devouring humans when they ventured too near our dens, and sent Greycoat to determine the truth of the stories.

Human-Flesh

Silent winces and shies back as the howls become discordant. Several wolves give voice — loudly — to their thoughts on eating the flesh of humans, both in the past and now. Silent listens, but a night-shattering howl from Born-in-Thunder silences the argument. The night is still for a few moments as the Talons look at each other uncertainly, waiting for one of them to take up the howls again. Finally, someone does, and the story of the War of Rage continues.

Greycoat entered our hunting grounds wearing his human skin, and immediately two young Red Talons set upon him. He flung them off with the strength of a bear, and brandished a giant stone axe. He demanded to be taken before the alpha, and, recognizing a stronger Garou, the cubs did so.

Greycoat demanded to know if the Talons were eating humans. The alpha — a No-Moon called Spring Stream and a cub of Fells-Trees — responded that they were eating nothing (for Greycoat had not come during a meal). Greycoat grew very angry and asked if they Talons had ever eaten of human flesh, and Spring Stream simply responded that she could not speak for every Red Talon. Finally, on the verge of rage, Greycoat asked if Spring Stream herself had ever eaten a human, and she responded that she had not. Greycoat fumed, but asked no more questions, for Spring Stream had confused him with the truth.

Spring Stream then offered Greycoat a den for the night and the chance to hunt with the Red Talons, which he accepted. The hunt that night was fierce, for the Talons had many wolves to feed, and they brought down a full herd of deer. As the Talons feasted, a bear emerged from the wood and chased the wolves from one of the carcasses, and began to drag the meat away. The Talons saw, but did not stop the bear. The bear's kin, the Gurahl, while their task was very different from the Talons', had never done them wrong, and so they were willing to share. But the Talons' guest did not take so kindly to the intruder.

Greycoat leapt forward and slew the bear with one stroke of his mighty axe. The Talons backed away, fearing he had gone mad, but Spring Stream stepped forward and asked why he had slain a fellow predator with no cause.

The Fenrir warrior answered that in his homeland and in that of the Silver Fangs, the bears and wolves were at war. The bears — and the Gurahl, he said — stole wolf cubs at night and ate them, raised their own dead using foul magics, and were in league with the dead-but-walking humans who feasted on warm blood. The bears were to be killed whenever they were found, he said, by order of the alpha-tribe.

The Talons finished their meal, but amidst whines and uncomfortable glances. Their wolf-hearts told them that no predator was ever to be attacked without provocation, and that no other shape-shifter should ever be targeted unless it acted against Gaia directly, as defending Gaia from such was the Garou's task. Their human-minds said that since Greycoat had been sent by the ruler-tribe, and the ruler-tribe said that the Gurahl were to be killed, the Gurahl should be killed. That night, as they slept, Spring Stream walked in the woods by herself, likely looking for answers.

What happened to her, no Talon knows. All that we know is that in the morning, her body was found in pieces not far from where Greycoat had killed the bear. And again the Fenrir warrior roared about the evil of the Gurahl, and again the wolf-hearts and human-minds of the Talons conflicted. Finally, with no alpha to guide them and the mighty howls of Greycoat urging them on, the Red Talons entered the War of Rage.

Spring Stream's Death

As the story continues and Silent listens to the tales of the slaughter of the Grondr and the Apis, he hears a quiet, lilting howl from Last-To-Eat, a thin, ragged Crescent Moon:

Did the bears kill Spring Stream in revenge, when the Gurahl had never approached us without respect, even if they had reason? Did Greycoat kill Spring Stream for angering him with the truth? Did the Silver Fangs instruct Greycoat to call the Red Talons to the War of Rage? Was Greycoat truly a Fenrir, or was he Garou at all?

Does it truly matter to our slain Fera cousins?

The War of Rage continued for some time, and no Talon knows exactly what ended it. Many Garou believe that it ended with their victory, but it was a war born of folly, a human-like war, one that no one could ever win. All of the knowledge we had about the war came from the Corax, our friends and allies, and we when turned our backs on them for insisting that we fight against the Silver Fangs, we lost most of that knowledge.

Should we have fought the Silver Fangs? Our wolf-hearts and human-minds were in agreement on that point. If we had, we would have been slain. No true predator enters a fight it knows will be fatal.

Metal

In years past, humans hunted — prey and each other — with false claws made of stone or wood, and that the Red Talons understood. When humans began taking stone from the earth and changing it into a stronger stone, and creating sharper claws than ours from it, we took notice. The humans clearly felt they'd created something great. We recognized the hand of the Wyrm, however, for they hadn't created anything. They had merely changed a pure thing into something that should not exist. The humans' creation of metal was surely a great lesson in cunning from the Wyrm, one that the Garou learned as well. Before the humans created metal, we had little to fear from silver, as no weapons were fashioned from it. But when humans learned to make weapons that their race would fear, a Garou learned how to fashion claws from the metal his people feared. We know the tale of the first Ahroun to change his claws to silver.

The Ahroun was called Luna's-Smiling-Child, and he was of the tribe we know as the Shadow Lords. He wore a smile in his human form for all to see, but his smile was a lie, and he bore nothing but hatred in his heart. Before he ever mated, he had made enemies of powerful Garou in his tribe and others, and he knew that if he did not find a way to defeat them, he would never survive to see his own cubs born. But he was no true warrior, though an Ahroun born, and one night he walked into a human gathering to see a human male hold up a blade made of metal. He said nothing, only smiled.

He went to the Silver Fangs and asked their Galliards for stories of the moon-metal. He asked their Ahroun for tales of battle and the most frightening weapons of the Wyrm they had seen. He asked their Crescent-Moon to speak with moon-spirits for him. And the Silver Fangs discovered that the moon-spirits could grant them the "Gift" of Silver Claws.

Luna's-Smiling-Child learned the Gift as well, and went on to slay his enemies and sire pups. But

when his enemies' kin came for him, he said that the Silver Fangs were the only tribe that knew the Gift of Silver Claws, and while the Fangs battled his enemies' kin, he quietly slipped away.

He did not escape his shame, however, for Full-Moons of all tribes learn the Gift. However, young cliaths are never taught it, as they must learn to control their Rage before holding such a deadly secret.

The Wyrm Claims a Tribe

Was it during the War of Rage, or before, or just after? No Talon knows for certain. All we know is that the Fianna sent messengers to our lands, warning us of the White Howlers. They had changed, said the Fianna, into enemies, and even now they gathered and reveled in their madness. Someday soon, said the Fianna, the Silver Fangs would call a war moot and lead the Garou in a purge of the former Howlers.

The Red Talons heard these words and shuddered, for we had seen the truth and knew the Howlers would rise again and one day become the most powerful tribe in the world. But we also believed in the Silver Fangs, and believed that perhaps, just this once, they knew the true nature of what was happening and would act in time to prevent the worst.

We should have led the purge ourselves. Some time ago, we could have killed every last Black Spiral before they spread and sired. We could have stopped them before they corrupted Gaian Garou. Now they are everywhere, an army in service to the Wyrm, already suffering the insanity that the Wyrm means for Gaia Herself.

One war that we could have won, and it was never fought.

The War Over Humans

Garou and Fera fought the First War and the War of Rage, but the War Over Humans was fought by Weaver and Wyrm, and it continues to this day. The Wyrm had given the humans its gift of cunning long ago. After the War of Rage, the Weaver tried to gift the humans as well.

Hives

During the War of Rage, the humans had flourished, for the predators had been too busy fighting each other to kill or teach them. They had built walls and hives so strong that not even a strong pack could fell them. They had developed methods of working the flesh of the Weaver into false claws stronger and sharper than anything they had made before. And great Gaia, how they bred.

Humans do not breed in litters; most often, they birth only one pup at a time. But they seem to do little else *but* breed, and they live much longer than wolves. After the War of Rage, the Talons retreated into the still-pure places and bred new litters themselves, hoping that by keeping the sacred places pure, there would still be some hope.

We emerged some time later and found that much had changed. The Hives had grown larger, and now, instead of simply dwellings that the humans slept in, they include buildings that took lifetimes to construct dedicated to worship of human stories. We did not then nor do we now understand humans that insist on worshipping their legends; we tell the legends of our past, we may remember the lessons our ancestors taught us, but we know the creation of the world and all in it stems from Gaia. Have the humans forgotten, that they pretend that the world was created by one of their own? Have they forgotten how once even *they* knew enough to give thanks to the land around them?

During our time in retreat, while we bred and reared a new generation of Red Talons, the Weaver had come to the humans and gifted them with patience — or tried. The humans were unsuited to patience, and while some of them learned the lesson and became leaders, most did not, and simply took what they wanted from the world. The humans who learned patience set up Litanies for the others, but most humans only follow their Litanies when someone is watching. They have no hearts to tell them what is correct and what is not, and their human-minds only tell them what will bring consequence and what will not. This was the Weaver's gift to the humans, indirectly: law and consequence, and more importantly, how to break one and avoid the other.

When a natural law conflicted with a human desire, they simply made up a human law to allow what they wanted to do. If the natural law stated that humans should avoid another predator's hunting ground, they made up a "God" and said that this being instructed them to invade the predator's lands. Those who claimed to know the God's mind became rich and fat, because the other humans — still prey, still gullible — believed their words.

And this has been the same wherever humans are found, no matter if they even try to respect Gaia. Humans prey on each other, and they are out of joint with the world.

The Night-Fear

The Red Talons are out of joint as well, as are all Fera, because we have a human-mind. Doing our Gaia-appointed task is difficult with such an affliction, since the humans *have* no task under Gaia, the human-mind pushes and distracts the Fera away from their jobs. We howl still about the Night-Fear and its failure.

Some time ago, a Half-Moon called Forest-Edge discovered a small herd of humans on his hunting grounds. Rather than attack outright, he took on the war-form and roared at them. The humans, their hearts recognizing the Crinos but their minds not accepting it, ran back to their hive and said that the forest was cursed by a creature they did not understand. And Forest-Edge had an idea, one that spread quickly to other Talons.

Upon finding humans on their hunting grounds or too close to a caern, they would wound or frighten the human, but not kill it. Then, the human would spread the word among its fellows that the place was haunted or cursed, and humans would avoid it. And, for a time, this seemed to work.

Eventually, though, the humans felt a greater need to despoil the Earth and cut down Her trees than to avoid "cursed places." Under the mask of "hunting demons," humans in robes and bearing strange gifts came to our groves and drove us away. Some we killed, but not enough. Forest-Edge himself died at the hands of these humans, and the Night-Fear slowly fell out of practice.

The War on Human Cubs

We do not know when it was, but we know it happened in a far-off land, after the Wyrmcoming but before the Last Days. A hive in these lands began to grow, for the humans there did nothing but breed. A small sept of Red Talons near the hive feared that soon the humans would cut down the trees of their forest to build more dwellings for themselves. A young Galliard called Quick-to-Howl ventured to the hive to see the humans up close. When he got there, two human cubs spotted him, and began to call after him, calling him *"Garou!"* He was frightened, but also curious, because he knew that the homid-born werewolves also called themselves "Garou." And so he approached the children.

He got within a few steps and found himself caught in a trap. The humans who lived in this hive knew of the Garou, that much is certain. Not only did their cubs know our name, but the trap had also been laced with silver, and Quick-to-Howl, though strong and young, died in terrible pain.

That night, the humans rejoiced at killing a "monster." That monster was a true predator and innocent of ever harming a human. What the humans did was unjust, but the Talons took their revenge.

Over the next moon, the Red Talons visited that hive every night. Some nights we took grown men who stood outside hiding behind their fire. Some nights we took women as they cackled to each other. But most often, we took their children, and we used no weapons or traps.

That hive died out. This is what the Talons can do, and could yet, if we could only act. Yet we do not, for fear of the other tribes' disapproval.

Prophecies

While the Night-Fear chased humans out of their homes and other, purer Talons slew any that came too close, truths were beginning to come to the tribe. We knew, before the Silent Striders in their barren wastelands or the Stargazers in their hives built for human-thought, that the end was coming and the humans would bring it. We knew — even if we never heard the Prophecy of the Phoenix — we knew that the Apocalypse would not happen in one short year. We saw the signs, and we tried to tell the ruler tribe. But no matter how loud our howls, we were not heard. And so we could do nothing but breed, eat, and wait.

Some few of those prophecies were howled down through the ages. Most have come true. Some have not yet. One concerns a mad wolf raging across a flat, treeless expanse, crushing strange wolf-like creatures in its jaws and bellowing in rage and sorrow. Another speaks of a great storm and of a bear rising up to beat the storm down. These we have seen pass.

Our tribe has howled other prophecies. Our ancestors wake us some nights, and some of us see visions of metal beasts that swallow entire forests, tossing the creatures within into the air and strewing their bloodless bodies into pits. We howl portents of a mighty black Crinos with a Garou's head in each hand, screaming to the skies in victory. But not all of our prophecies are dire.

From the Amazon, we have heard that Fierce Hunger has seen the end of the war in a pool of water, that a creature taller than the trees will rise from rivers to

The Unspoken Prophecy

Silent knows a prophecy of his own. He heard it from his uncle, a Crescent-Moon who died recently. To his knowledge, his uncle never shared the prophecy with anyone but Silent — and Silent, of course, can't share it with anyone. The prophecy cannot be written in glyphs, for what it suggests is nothing short of blasphemy. Nor could it spoken in human-tongue, even if the Garou of this sept could understand it, for the words simply don't exist.

But Silent knows the prophecy of the Last Defeat. The one fateful day that will spell the end of the Red Talons, when their last remaining bit of pride is stripped from them.

Silent knows the prophecy of the human-born Talon. But he wouldn't utter a growl about it, even if he could.

crush the Wyrm's forces. An old howl tells of a dark wolf with blood on his teeth that will come from a black land to lead the Garou against a mad ruler-human. And here in this sept, we have seen the Prophecy of Gaia's Rebirth come to pass — the rite is with us again.

For all of this, the Talons are not well-suited to prophecy. Many times we do not recognize it until it has already passed. That is why we tried to tell the other tribes what we saw, that they might look at it with their human-minds and tell us what our wolf-hearts were afraid of.

Never once have they given us answers. That doesn't surprise us. We are still waiting for the answer to a much older question, after all.

More Wars

Our task under Gaia is to fight, and so we have never stopped. More carnage continued to mark our lives and the lives of our cubs as the years passed, and we can see only more for the future.

Did Gaia choose us for our task well, or did She know we would create our own work?

The Wyrmcoming

Some time ago, before the sky turned black but after the War of Rage ended, the Talons found Moon Bridges to far away places, inhabited by Garou who followed odd totems and spoke strange languages. They, like the Silver Fangs and their ilk, had chosen people and bred with them. But they had tried to teach their people about respect and balance. It had not worked, of course — humans are humans, after all. These humans were even responsible for destroying whole species. The mammoths fell before them, and when the Talons discovered this, we almost raged against them, until the native Garou told us that that slaughter happened so long ago that none of them had ever seen a mammoth. Time, after all, means little to us.

The land in which these Garou lived was vast and plentiful, and although the humans hadn't learned everything, they did seem to know how to keep their breeding under control. The Talons found places in the wilds that no Fera had ever laid eyes on, and claimed such sites as our hunting grounds. There were Talons in the Pure Lands before the other Garou arrived, to be sure. But we were far from the coasts, and we kept to ourselves. By the time we knew about the Wyrmcoming, there was nothing we could do.

When the Wyrmcomers arrived, few Red Talons arrived with them. More came to the Pure Lands as the Storm War progressed, and when they did, they sometimes joined our septs and packs, and sometimes simply ran with the Wyrmcomers. Because the Red Talons do not tie ourselves to humans and their foolishness, we do not have the need to kill each other over differences in place of birth. The other tribes did not fare so well. The Croatan fell, the Wendigo raged, the Uktena plotted. And the War of Rage began anew.

The Storm War

Not only did Garou fight Fera, but Garou fought Garou as well. The Pure Ones fought to defend their homes, and we fought as well, sometimes on their side, sometimes not, but most often to defend our own lands. We did not fight the other Fera in this war, however — at least not often. We had other matters.

The Umbra, the wolf-heart of the world, exploded into storm, and we recognized one of our oldest proph-

The White Wolf

Silent listens carefully to the howls of the Storm War, for he knows that a young gibbous-moon called Cannot-Hide hears his ancestor's howls of this war, and often tells strange tales of the time. Tonight is no different:

During the Storm War, the humans rounded up herds of prey and put walls around them, and then were angry when the wolves jumped their walls and hunted the prey. The humans began a massive hunt for wolves, and any human to kill a wolf was rewarded with mystical, glittering charms. One human killed so many wolves that he had no need of prey-herds anymore — he was so respected that others caught his food and made his clothes.

But then a great Red Talon Full-Moon called Heat-on-Sand came. He was pure white and he raced across the plains to the hive of this wolf-killer. On the way he stopped at every human prey-herd and killed one of their animals, or, if he could not find one, one of their pups.

The human wolf-killer laid a trap for Heat-on-Sand, a young lamb, and sat with his false claws to wait. But Heat-on-Sand was Garou, and would not be lured by prey. Nor would the human's strange weapons dissuade him. He charged at the wolf-killer and the human screamed, knowing that his time was through.

Human legends told of the "white wolf," but they did not tell the whole truth. They said that the wolf-killer's throat was torn out, which is true, but Heat-on-Sands also took the human's skin and delivered it to the humans who dispensed the shining rewards for would-be wolf-killers. They would not give him a reward, of course, so he took their skins as well, and offered all of them up to Griffin.

Griffin did reward Heat-on-Sands, and all of his children bear his white coat and fierce heart, and so it is even now.

ecies come to life. We fought when we could, but how can one fight a storm? Our wolf-hearts told us to huddle in our dens to wait it out, just as we do in a natural storm. There was nothing we could do but wait and watch, and when the storm finally ended, we knew who to thank. We have watched over the Gurahl's caerns in the Pure Lands ever since, just in case one returns.

During the Storm War, the humans' behavior only got worse. They raped the land, scarring it with iron rails and scorching the sky with smoke. The native creatures that the Wyrm had wrought (for the Wyrm had seen fit to keep the Garou busy for some time by creating such horrors) took a liking to the humans and infected some, ate some, and bred with others. The dead-but-walking humans arrived as well, and hunted the night like spiders. The Storm War was a war with a thousand enemies, and the Talons hardly knew who to side with.

The ruler tribes called for our aid, as did the native tribes, and our wolf-hearts responded to both. Whenever Garou fights Garou, the Red Talons become confused and sad. We wished that the Storm War would be the last time this would happen, but a much worse War was on the horizon. Our prophecies had spoken of this war, too, but again, no one listened.

The War of Tears

Far across the Oceans, farther even than the Pure Lands, was a strange place of deserts, forests, and spirits that no Garou had ever seen. This land was separate from the world so long that the Triat and Gaia Herself had taken on new faces, and the Garou there were Garou in name only. They did not breed with wolves, but strange animals with a coughing bark instead of a howl. And so when the Red Talons arrived, they felt offended.

They ranged into the wastes of this new land and bred with the false-wolves there. In so doing, they lost their wolf-hearts and became dogs for the ruler tribes — and for the Wyrm. They did not realize that change is the way of the world and the way of the Wyld, and that things are necessarily different in different lands. That is why a wolf in one land is gray while in another she is black and this is fine. But after breeding with these "dingoes," the Red Talons forgot about change. And after that, all it took was time until the Wyrm found a way into their hearts.

We remember the name of Wyrmbaiter, the mighty Full-Moon that sired cubs from a dingo bitch and led the Garou into the Dreamtime to kill the Bunyip. We remember the War of Tears, how in the span of a short time, an entire tribe died, their blood staining the earth and the Talons howling victory over their bodies. We know what happened thereafter — the other tribes took their caerns, the Galliards composed songs of victory, and the Wyrm laughed and laughed, for Gaia lost a tribe of Her finest children.

Winning the War of Tears

Silent has heard the story of how Wyrmbaiter was tricked into leading the War of Tears before, and the story still confuses him. As he listens to it this time, World-Heart, a Galliard like himself, adds a snarl into the story:

Wyrmbaiter was not tricked. He understood that the Black Spirals goaded him into attacking the Bunyip, but attacked them regardless. Wyrmbaiter won the War of Tears and cleansed Australia of the false Garou, the Garou born of animals that do not howl. The Bunyip were never of wolf born, and even dingoes are closer to wolf than the creatures that spawned them. Gaia never granted them a task æ like the serpents, they stole a task from us.

And if they stole from us, what did they do to the Garou that must have protected Australia before the Talons discovered it? I say, the War of Tears was a long time in coming, but it was a just war.

The Red Talons of this land are still there, and Wyrmbaiter's line is still present. But the last son of Wyrmbaiter roams the land howling for blood, and none listen to his howls. But he will be heard, or else he will scream down the skies in rage, or so goes the prophecy.

The Blackened Earth

Some time ago, after the Wyrmcoming but before the Last Days, the humans ripped open Gaia's flesh, plumbed Her body of its bile, and created metal beasts that drink this ichor. They built hives that churn out fouled air and water, and then dirtied the world around them. We had seen this in prophecy; all Garou had, as the Prophecy of the Phoenix speaks of such things. But we did not know what to do.

Harano

The human-mind visits many curses on a wolf-born Garou. Human love is confusing and unsure, unlike the pure loyalty of the pack. Human mating is fraught with emotion and pain and has little to do, many times, with furthering the race. Human faith is a lie, for humans know little of the spirit world and so have no true beliefs. But the worst of all human-mind plagues is Harano.

When the world began to grow foul, many Red Talons urged the reinstatement of the Impergium with even more fervor than we had before. And the ruler-tribes turned us down. When the ruler-tribes themselves found their lands contaminated and the great Zmei stirring beneath the earth, we argued for action, and again were ignored. We could not act out, for the ruler-tribes were the alphas. And so we despaired, our tails and heads low. The Wyrm has killed many Red Talons, and humans, by killing our Kin, have slain far more. But Harano has made end to warrior, mother, cub, and shaman all.

As humans set about the Wyrm's work, driving Gaia slowly mad, we ceased to care. We had our caerns, what few remained under our guard. We had our mates, and we fought the Wyrm — but we knew then, for the first time, that *we could not win*. The Wyrm would win, Gaia would go mad, and the Earth would become so many chunks of rocks, the Weaver's last attempt to survive. Like Rorg, the Many-Taloned Hunter, Eshtarra would lose everything but her mind.

When humans went to war, that gave us hope, once. But human war has changed.

Human Wars

We have never understood what makes humans fight on such a scale. The Garou have fought such wars, but we did so in keeping with our Gaia-granted tasks. Since humans have no understanding of Gaia, their wars are all in vain. Our human-minds find humor in that.

But when the humans started using poisons, we did not find humor. Our human-minds and wolf-hearts both felt the same thing: terror. When humans fought in the past, their blood fed the earth, but that was all. Sometimes the Red Talons would use their wars as a way to bring some of them low, but many times, we would simply retreat to our caerns and rest.

Some time ago, though, humans used the same poisons on each other that they used on the Earth, and then many of them died indeed. They choked the land with gases that caused any who breathed them to cough up bits of flesh. They release disease and then marveled as it spread. Strangely, they do not see that the diseases are much like they are.

As humans grew cleverer — perhaps with the Wyrm's continued assistance — they learned to kill each other with great claps of thunder and fire. They learned to take to the waters and drown each other by destroying the floating beasts their enemies rode. They took to the air — and that is where they did the most damage, for that is where the Wyrm is most comfortable.

The humans built metal beasts that fly. Some fly so high and so fast that we cannot smell them, only see their trails. Some fly low and slowly, and sometimes we can destroy those beasts. But many of them can throw fire and thunder and metal, and some time ago, the humans built flying beasts that carried the seed of the Wyrm. We know from the tortured spirits of the world, and from stories from other Garou, what happened when that seed was spilled on the ground. We had no Kin in the lands where it happened, and for that we howl in thanks.

The ground itself caught fire. The shadows of the living became as stone. The seed of the Wyrm cannot create, as the Wyrm is no living thing, but it can corrupt and decay. We have heard stories that entire hives fell before the seed of the Wyrm, and at the time, many Talons rejoiced. But then we heard that the seed corrupted the land and we howled in sorrow.

If they kill themselves in the process, will that bring back even one of the wolf cubs they've murdered? The more of the world the humans despoil, the more likely it is that Gaia will simply drift apart, and the Wyrm will win.

Dwindling Woodlands

When the humans are not killing each other, they seem to wish the earth to be reduced to a flat meadow. They cut down the great forests the world over — by Gaia's mercy and our protection this forest still stands! What they do with the trees, we do not know. They no longer make weapons out of wood, and their hives are made of stone. Perhaps they simply burn it as offerings to the Wyrm.

When a forest dies, it takes many lifetimes — even human lifetimes — to rebuild. Humans do not think beyond their own lifetimes, however, for they do not care for their young as wolves do. Our brethren Garou tell us that some humans "set aside" great expanses of forest that is not to be touched, calling them "parks" or "reserves." The Children of Gaia and the Glass Walkers seem to feel that this is evidence that the humans are learning to respect Gaia. We say that it is evidence that the humans have won, when they can choose with impunity which of the Wyld places can be destroyed or spared, and Gaia's warriors respect those decisions.

The Red Talons find themselves living in these "parks" sometimes. We see them for what they are — the Wyld contained by a fence. That is not Gaia's way and it is not right. Our hunting grounds are ours, not the humans', and we defend them when necessary, but in many places, the Talons recognize the wisdom of not killing humans at their doorstep. Every wolf knows not to shit in its den. Instead, we frighten the humans. We watch them. And woe betide any human who befouls such a place, for they are breaking not only their own laws, but Gaia's as well.

New Cleverness

We have learned much, and we do not forget our lessons. Recent moons have seen the Garou and the Fera unite in far-off places, and though some Talons still cling to the blindness of the Silver Fangs, we howl in joy that not all of our cousins are dead. We rejoice that although the Wyrm is hopelessly corrupt, his gift to the predators — cunning — is still present.

But the humans grow more cunning as well. Wolves are well-used to human cleverness. In the cold lands no so far from this very sept, the humans would coat a blade with fat, so that wolves would lick it and then bleed to death. Humans learned their gift of cunning well, and turned that gift to preying on each other as well as on other animals. Their need to kill has not

changed. We have sung already about the toll the Storm War took on wolves, but we faced a much more dire threat in the cold lands of Russia.

The Fall of the Winter Forest Sept

Our tribe was once strong in Russia, but some time ago, the humans went to war on the wolves. They flew at us with great flying beasts and stung us from afar with their false claws. They killed as many as they could, bludgeoning our pups in the snow. The Talons took blood from these cowardly false predators whenever we could, but they moved faster than we did. The other tribes helped us in this war, with no politics and no sad stories about the poor humans, for their Kin were dying as well. In the end, we shall never know how many Wyrm beasts still live, how many songs go unsung, how many pups unsired because of the humans and their bloodlust. But perhaps the worst tragedy in Russia happened after the death of Baba Yaga.

Our Galliards howl long and mournful for the brave dead of the Winter Forest. We have heard the stories, and the stories change of course, but we know that one cold night, a stag appeared to a pack of Red Talons. They gave chase, meaning to bring the animal down, but it led them to a caern of Fertility, which the Talons then swore to guard. They did so for some time, even throughout the terror of the Shadow Curtain. They maintained the caern in the face of an attack by one of the mighty Zmei. When Baba Yaga was finally slain, we here at the Sept of Fells-Trees waited eagerly for some word to come from the Winter Forest, as before the Shadow Curtain we had shared stories and rites.

No word came.

Finally, not so long ago, a great stag-spirit appeared to Sunrise-Heart-*rhya* and told him that the Winter Forest Sept fell. The stag did not reveal how or why, or what manner of being destroyed it. And we still do not know.

The Fate of the Winter Forest

As howls of Russia begin, Silent notices that all voices but one dies out. Born-in-Thunder, the Galliard who silenced a disagreement before, howls alone, and Silent recalls that he was whelped in Russia before the Shadow Curtain arose. He has seen the Winter Forest, and his howls fill Silent's mind with pups tussling in the snow, with the scents of a bitch in heat, and with an endless forest where no wolf need ever grow lean, even in the coldest winter. He hangs his head, for if the sept has truly fallen, then he will never see it.

Born-in-Thunder continues and howls in praise of the Black Furies, whose lupus sometimes tended this caern as well. If the Talons were to approach any tribe for help in discovering the truth of the Winter Forest Sept, he asserts, it would be the Furies.

We are reluctant to tell the other tribes, for we do not need their pity. If the sept truly has fallen — and why would Stag lie? — then we must see to the dead. If not, then we must discover why the have sent no word for so long.

The Ahadi and the Kucha Ekundu

Some time ago, after the War of Rage but before the humans spilled the seed of the Wyrm, a pack of Red Talons traveled to a land that held no wolves, and found the Mokolé watching them. Rather than fight with the mighty dragons, the Talons rolled over in recognition of their strength and wisdom and asked if they might somehow be allowed to live there with them. The dragons gave them a task — if the Red Talons could hunt and breed with the strange, painted wolves of Africa, they could remain. The Red Talons took to the challenge, and through cleverness and spirit magic, changed themselves to breed with these creatures.

Today, they are called Kucha Ekundu, and they run the vast plains of Africa, small and brindled in ways that no wolf in the world has seen. They fought alongside Walks-With-Might and the Bastet against the minions of the tainted Simba King, Black Tooth. Their numbers are small, having been ravaged by disease, but they are rebuilding. Stories filter even here, carried by their Silent Strider allies, that the Kucha Ekundu are true Talons even if they are not true wolves. They protect their packs from humans and from Wyrm-creatures, and that they respect the Ahadi and the other Fera of Africa. Although they welcome Talon visitors at their Caern of the Bloodied Rock, true wolves are often uncomfortable in the climate, and their "native tongue" differs from ours somewhat.

Dangerous Feelings

All Garou have heard stories of humans left bleeding and harried by wolves until they finally die of exposure. We have heard the stories of human children butchered and left outside their families' homes. We have heard of human corpses lashed to trees and disemboweled. Most Garou assume that the Black Spiral Dancers are responsible for these atrocities, and those with human Kin pursue such beasts with even more fervor.

True Talons?

Silent listens as low growls rumble under the howls about the Kucha Ekundu:

The Kucha Ekundu are not true Talons, and not even true Garou. Like the Bunyip, they breed with animals that are only like wolves in that they run on four legs. The small hunters they litter are more like dogs than wolves, and they line up next to the other Fera in battle. They should remain in their savannas and plains, never taking the name of Red Talon.

But some Garou know the truth.

The Black Spirals do those things and worse, certainly. However, when word comes from a forest in which no Black Spiral has ever been seen that a human family-herd has been torn limb from limb, the Red Talons look suspiciously at our own. There is no shame in killing humans, even in killing human-cubs. But that killing must be swift and clean, and while a Garou can count such a thing as a victory, she may not take joy in simple slaughter.

Why, when it seems so natural? Because the only reason it seems natural is the human-mind. The human-mind revels in carnage for its own sake. We do not. Listen to your wolf-heart when you kill humans. Think of them as predators who would eat your pups, and put them down quickly. Do not prolong their deaths. Do not do to them what they would likely do to you. If you allow yourself to feel what they feel, to kill as they kill, the Wyrm will slip its claws into your fur and ride you like a tick.

Young Red Talons sometimes fall into this trap, and we can only hope that they come to their senses, or find a good teacher. Beware of thinking of hate and revenge, lest you become like Storm-Eye Wiser than Gaia, who forced her own wolf Kin packmate to kill a human rather than letting him die in peace after a long, full life.

The War in the Amazon

No wolves — and therefore no Garou — are native to the dense, hot jungles of the Amazon. The Uktena have human Kin there, but wolves find the land uncomfortable. That is, until they enter the Umbra.

Fierce Hunger was one of the first of our tribe to venture to the Amazon and join the war, and when she entered the spirit worlds there, she could only marvel. She called that jungle the "First Jungle," and sent stories to Talons around the world about its beauty and the necessity of saving it. And Talons all over the world listened and joined the battle.

Golgol Fangs-First, a mighty Fenrir, is the alpha of the war, and Fierce Hunger obeys him. The war continues on, with humans armed with silver false claws fighting Garou armed with human weapons. The trees come alive with energy at the whim of the Bastet and no beast or human is safe from the Mokolé in the rivers. The battle has been fought for some time, and still more of the First Jungle falls daily. Many of the Red Talons involved believe that they are fighting the wrong war, that the humans felling the trees should be the main target, rather than the humans stalking the jungles with their weapons. We have heard stories that Fierce Hunger plans to bring that idea before Golgol Fangs-First, but other Garou are wary — they remember the stories of the last mighty Fenrir to question the Red Talons. However, as Golgol Fangs-First has made some peace with the Bastet, rather than insisting on slaughtering them, she is hopeful that he will listen to reason.

Dangerous Rites

Silent has heard the story of Storm-Eye, and knows that there is more to it, but of course he cannot be heard. Instead, he listens to Black-Paws instructing his charge:

You hear the others howl of wolves who succumb to human emotions, yes? I tell you there is a different reason for this brutality, and it is a dire portent for our tribe. Some young Talons have discovered æ or been taught æ rites that feed the earth with the pain and blood of humans. While this might seem fitting, since the humans take what they will from the land, remember that no wound can be healed by making a further wound. Kill humans that they might never wound Gaia again, but do so cleanly and quickly, and beware any Garou, Talon or not, who tells you that you may help Gaia by committing such acts.

The New Impergium

Far from the jungles, though, things are improving for the tribe. In the lands of Europe, where humans have paved and defiled more of the land than anywhere else, the First War has begun anew. And we owe this, in part, to the Shadow Lords.

Not long ago, the Shadow Lords offered their help in saving our caerns in the great dark forests of Eastern Europe from Wyrm influence, and we refused — accepting help from the Lords sounded dangerous and ultimately costly. But when the Blue River Caern fell to human poisons, we accepted their help. The Red Talons are shamed that we did not accept sooner, but now that the Lords support us, many a human in hive near Red Talon hunting grounds has disappeared.

The Shadow Lords have been reluctant to aid us in reinstating the Impergium in other lands, especially here, as their influence is not as strong and we do not wish to go to go to war with the Silver Fangs. But should the Lords become the ruler tribe — and every alpha wolf eventually loses his pack, be it through a clever challenger or simply death — then perhaps things will change in the Once-Pure Lands.

City Wolves

The news from Europe is not all promising, however. As the wilderness dies, our Kin must follow what food they can find, and this leads them ever closer to the scabs. Packs of wolves now roam the dirtiest, most tainted sections of the human hives, eating refuse and rats. Worst of all, until we can find somewhere for these wolves to go, the Talons must protect them, both

from humans who would kill them and from *urrah* who would breed with them. Although we are loath to fight our fellow Garou, we will not allow our Kinfolk to sire cubs for the Bone Gnawers or Glass Walkers.

The Winter Council

Not long ago, before the great storm in the East but after the First War began again, the elders of our tribe met, secretly, in a small sept called the Weeping Daughter. There, they decided that the other tribes would be too slow to appreciate the progress we had made with the new Impergium. They debated and fought, and finally decided that over the coming years, the fiercest Red Talon cubs would be taken to the best-hidden caerns and taught the ways of the tribe, without ever seeing a human being or even a human-born Garou. This meeting, called the Winter Council, decreed that when the Talons were old enough, they would be bound into packs for the express purpose of reinstating the Impergium in places where it was most needed.

The first of the packs was formed recently, bound together by Griffin and sent to the human-hive called Montreal. We have not yet heard of their doings, but surely such pure Garou are destined for great things. The other tribes do not know of these Winter Packs, and they cannot know, for they would surely oppose us. But as time goes on, and the tribes see how easily the humans shrink back to their hovels when the true predators come for them, they too will lend us their cubs for these packs.

The Great Storm

Perhaps the beings that rent the Umbra into a great tempest during the Wyrmcoming awakened, or perhaps something much worse. But recently, the spirits carried tales of a great battle far to the east, where a dragon, a bird, and a tiger fought with an ancient evil. We never saw a prophecy about this, and the spirits were vague, but we understand that not only was the evil destroyed, but the battle claimed the lives of thousands of humans as well.

While we are reluctant to guess as to what truly happened, many Talons the world over have asserted that Griffin came to Gaia in three forms — Sabertooth Tiger, Great Crane, and a third that we have never seen (dragons are supposed to the be creatures of the Wyrm, but perhaps that is not always the case). These Talons believe that the three-bodied Griffin struck down the evil being and the thousands of humans he would have used as an army. Some young Talons now wish to travel to these foreign lands and search the Umbra for any trace of Griffin and his mysterious "third body."

Tomorrow

We do not howl of what will happen, for we do not know. Even though we keep and hold prophecies of tomorrow, we have rarely been able to make sense of them enough to use them. If that were our only curse, the Red Talons would be doing well. But other misfortunes hamper us with each passing moon.

Wolf Kills

In the cold lands north, in the torn lands of the Russia, and in Europe where were visit our new Impergium on the humans, they murder our Kin with false claws. In the lands south of us, the so-called United States, they kill the last of the gray wolves and then say they do it to keep their children safe from wolves. Strange, is it not? If they would simply leave us alone, wolves would never trouble their children. But we will not allow the humans to kill us without wringing the blood from their bodies.

Other tribes, those tainted with human blood, do attempt to help us from within the dazing human leadership. But as we know, human-made laws carry no instinct, no true reason not to break them. Impose penalties, and some humans, if caught, may pay a price, but the culling will continue. The world has changed much since the First Times; the humans now practice the Impergium on us.

The Red Star

The strange storm in the East and the appearance of the three-bodied Griffin, despite the good it may have done, also heralded the appearance of Anthelios, the Red Star. It appears only in the Umbral sky and has grown closer to Gaia recently. We know little about it. We have our prophecies, but they make no sense as usual. We hear the howls from other Red Talon septs about a child that should not be, about the metis' curse being lifted, and about the Red Star gathering the fragments of Rorg and forming its own obscene world. We do not know what to believe.

Our Theurges ask lupus Garou of other tribes, and they all feel the same way about the star. It is a predator, something to be feared and destroyed as soon as possible. But we cannot reach it, and even now, as we howl on this glorious night, it shines down on us, laughing. Some tribes call it the "Eye of the Wyrm." And they may be right. But we will not scurry for cover like humans in a storm. We will perform our rite in defiance of this evil, and someday soon, we will find the means to destroy the Red Star. And then the tribes will listen to us, and we will ask them for an answer. The question is an old one, and the ruler-tribes have had some time to think on it. How will humans be controlled without killing them?

If there is no answer forthcoming, then we will cull the herds like never before. Our allies will rise up around us in a great pack, we will gather the Winter Cubs, and we will take to the hives. We will kill the humans quickly. We will not do to them what they would do to us — skin us, poison us, trap us. No, we will bring swift death down upon them with fang and claw, the way Gaia and the Triat intended when they made us predators. We will pull down their hives and call on our rite to refresh the soil. The soul of Gaia will be made pure again, and the Wyrm will abandon its quest to drive Her mad. This will be the way, and tomorrow, our cubs will sing of the peril and indignity we Red Talons faced some time ago.

Rebirth

Silent listens to the joyous howls of dreams of the future, and one howl soars about the rest. Sunrise Heart has arrived. The old wolf calls for silence, and the other Talons drop their heads in respect. And off down the mountain they run.

The tainted place has not been touched since the humans arrived. They are still there, still astride their metal beasts, still dead. The young Whole Mountain pack found them, crushed their vehicles and slew the humans, and carved the glyph for "taint" into the metal — and crossed it out with the symbol of Rage. But the road that the humans built, by clearing trees and beating down the earth, remains. Someday humans will come looking and that could threaten the caern itself.

Without the rite that Sunrise Heart now performs, Silent reflects, it might have been necessary to go hunting for the humans responsible and kill them, or at least scare them into never coming to the mountain again. That would have involved leaving the sept, donning the human skin, and perhaps even contacting the Wendigo's Sept of the Cold Sun for assistance. Now there will be no need of this.

Sunrise Heart walks around the metal beasts, howling out to Gaia to awaken. He rubs his muzzle over the sharpened edge of the smashed vehicle and his blood drips onto the human-made scar in the forest floor.

And the forest answers.

The plants shoot up through the dirt, although only a tiny bit of moonlight nourishes them. They overtake the vehicles, they blot out the road. Roots and moss cover the metal beasts, but do not touch the humans' bodies. They will decay as Gaia intended. Mighty trees appear from tiny saplings in less time than it takes to devour a mouse. The Garou howl in victory. Sunrise Heart-rhya, the great Red Talon ritemaster, has cleansed and protected this place.

Silent mutely throws back his head to the sky. He cannot howl, but tonight, the urge from his wolf-heart is too strong.

Chapter Two: Flesh

"The rest of the pack slept. He alone felt the touch of... he knew not what. Wolves don't grieve. Not even for themselves."

— Alice Borchardt, *Night of the Wolf*

The Red Talons are our last hope.

An appropriately dramatic way to begin, yes? But I truly believe it. After nearly five years of travel and study among the Talons, I believe that they may well hold the secrets surviving the Apocalypse, to reclaiming our lupus heritage, and perhaps to defeating — or curing — the Weaver and Wyrm. I don't mean to suggest that a sept of Red Talons has these secrets locked away somewhere and refuses to share them. That is not the way of Griffin's tribe (although it certainly tends to be the way of ours).

By way of preface, my name, among Garou, is Malcolm Night-Smile, a Galliard of the Shadow Lords, sometimes called Malcolm the Liar. Fresh from my terrifying Rite of Passage, I found myself graced (although at the time, "saddled" more accurately summed up the way I felt) with a Red Talon packmate. She was the Ahroun of the pack and she was called Snow Runner. My adventures with that pack lasted only a year, after which a miscalculation on my part cost the lives of three of our five members. Snow Runner was among them.

I took it upon myself to inform her home sept of her death and to sing her dirge there. They would not let me, but made me wait outside the bawn of the caern while they performed the Gathering for the Departed for her. When it was over, I was allowed into the sept, but grudgingly. The Talons — for there were no other Garou present — treated each other truly like family, and after only a day there, I could not longer deny that I was utterly alone. I decided then to take it upon myself to learn about the Red Talons, this mysterious and often derided tribe born entirely of wolf. Few Galliards carry stories of the tribe, and many Garou raised by human families blanch at having a Talon around. That attitude is damaging and unnecessary, as I hope to illustrate. During this report, I try to be as objective as I can, and the Talons have their flaws, just like all of us. I didn't omit anything, so the reader may find me mentioning some of the tribe's faults and wondering where the "last hope" comment came from. To that reader, I say: Read the whole document, and you'll see what I mean.

A word of dedication before we begin: My main "resource," so to speak, for many issues concerning the Talons was a Red Talon Philodox called Hears-the-Smallest Sounds. While in Eastern Europe, I visited the Blue River Caern (before its fall to pollution, obviously) and spoke with the Master of the Rite. His name was Hears-the-Smallest-Sounds, and he was very young to be given such a post. I later discovered that he had a voracious appetite for knowledge of all kinds, including more "humanish" meth-

ods of learning, which allowed him to learn rites much more quickly than his fellows and gain that prestigious post early on. He was well-versed in the lore of the Garou and had met members of most of the other tribes.

When the caern fell, I'm told, he survived the initial wave of poisonous Banes that killed off most of the Garou there. I have heard that he slipped into Harano as the caern's spirit expired and died on the water's edge. Consider this a legacy for Hears-rhya.

The Wolf Tribe

My travels took me all over the world. I visited places that wolves are found naturally, and nearly always found Talons there, but I also visited mixed septs that boasted a pack or even a single Talon member, and the difference in outlook is startling. The Talons are much more wolf than most homid Garou are human, and they resist — almost desperately — any attempt to bring out their human sides. They do admit that such exists, however, but treat it like an unbearable curse.

That, to us (by "us" I mean homid Garou) might seem strange or silly, but consider our context. We once went through the same thing. Having grown up as human beings, we then had to learn how to get on all fours and sniff the ground, how to anticipate our pack's whims by body language and odor, and (this one's the kicker for a lot of young homids), to accept that another Garou might be dominant. Dominance is a tricky subject in the modern world. It's the focus of nearly all of the internal trouble in the Garou Nation, to say nothing of the trouble it causes in human affairs. And that is why the Talons don't tend to make waves in the Nation — they know they aren't dominant because they can't move in human circles well enough to lead. And that's something they're willing to accept.

Talking With the Red Talons

Communicating with the Talons requires patience and a good sense memory (since most of the information one picks up is going to be through scent and touch as much as sound). If some of my accounts seem muddled or some of the "quotes" I've taken from Talons seem hard to understand, please recognize that they don't translate easily into human languages. I'd like to address three issues in particular.

History — Some Time Ago

I attempted to learn the history of the Talons, but it just isn't that simple. First of all, they are *very* reluctant to use any language but that of wolves, which is unsuited for telling stories in the fashion to which we homids are accustomed. Second, they are even more reluctant to trust any homid Garou who is not a packmate, and I was forced in several circumstances to live up to my rather unfortunate sobriquet and present myself as a lupus (to my credit, I was only discovered once, and the result is my only noticeable battle scar).

Talons don't approach history as immutable fact, largely because everything could have happened yesterday. They way they tell stories, everything from the creation of the world to their last meal happened "some time ago." If they feel the listener needs a frame of reference, they might add "after this event but before that event," but that's all the context one is likely to get. Therefore, I didn't ask about the tribe's history, in most instances. I asked about the tribe as it stands today.

Human-Mind and Wolf-Heart

The Red Talons feel, almost universally, that instinct and human thought are separate. They understand that both are required to deal with other Garou and therefore don't shun the "human-mind" entirely, but in their own company, they usually rely on their "wolf-heart." We all understand this distinction; even humans have instinct to a degree, it just isn't as sharp as in animals. The Red Talons, however, do not believe that humans have a "heart," and any talk of humans working under the same kind of instinct wolves do is tantamount to insult to many Talons (especially younger ones who still think of themselves more as wolves than werewolves).

Some concepts, to the Talons, belong squarely to the human-mind. Among them: time, jealousy, greed, money, mercy and desire. That's not to say that they can't understand or even come to know these concepts, but they won't recognize them at first. All they know is an unfamiliar hunger coming from their "human-minds" — and that tends to scare them. Sometimes, while talking to a young Talon, I'd find myself being tackled or challenged because my questions had awakened something in the Garou that he didn't recognize. Something to consider should a Talon associate or packmate behave erratically.

Glyph-Writing

Strangely enough, the Talons don't normally have issues with glyph writing. You'd think they'd consider it Weaver-ish or something, given that writing is so permanent, but most Talons understand the glyphs and use them. I think that they consider it just another way to mark territory, but for the Garou rather than other animals. I think they also figure that humans understand the glyphs as well (since humans use writing — Red Talons don't often understand the differences between human languages and figure that all writing is the same) so if they mark their territories with glyphs, any humans who enter know the risks. More on Talons and glyphs later on.

The Breeds

It bears noting that the Red Talons have very different opinions on a Garou (or even a tribe) depending on what one's breed happens to be. If no breed is specified, that is, if one were to ask a Red Talon "What do you think about the Shadow Lords?" and not qualify the question any further, the Talon would probably respond with regards to the lupus of that tribe. I asked a few Talons their thoughts on the breeds; the following is a synthesis of the answers I got.

Homid

The Red Talons have no homid Garou. I found that so hard to believe when I was a cliath that I actually made the mistake of insinuating to Snow Runner that the tribe simply killed them when they did occur. The result was painful. The tribe believes, not universally but nearly so, that homid Garou are deficient because they lack a wolf's natural instinct and instead rely on a human's easily-deceived logic. Frankly, I see their point.

However, the tribe suffers for its lack of homid Kinfolk, largely because they can only defend themselves and their territories through violence for so long. Human beings are determined and defiant, and by God, if there's a monster in those woods, someone is eventually going to make it his business to kill it. The Talons understand that determination — it's what drives them to believe that if they wipe out humanity, the world will heal itself.

The Talons look on their homid-less status as a mark of purity, and scoff at the Glass Walkers for neglecting their wolf side. As I remember my first time in the woods, trying to make sense of the input my wolf's nose was giving me, I can understand that argument. On the other hand, when I mentioned that attitude to a Glass Walker acquaintance, his response was to quote Thurber: "You might as well fall flat on your face as lean over too far backwards."

Metis

Technically, the Talons have no metis. If any are born that they don't kill, they give them to other tribes. But it ain't necessarily so, as the song says.

In recent years the Talons have accepted a handful of metis born to their tribe. So, it's not impossible to find a metis Talon. However, you could look at such a creature and know the definition of "omega wolf." Metis Talons are the lowest of the pack. They are rarely taught Gifts or rites in an all-Talon environment and, naturally, they eat last. The Talons see it as a true sign that the world is well and truly screwed that they have to accept any metis at all. (And incidentally, while it's not impossible to find a Talon metis, it is pretty much impossible to find the parents of such a metis.)

As for metis of other tribes, they make Talons uncomfortable. "Garou Shall Not Mate with Other Garou" is the law, but yet, here's this metis. How'd that happen? (And yes, the Talons do feel that way about their own metis.) Some young Talons, Philodox especially, won't even acknowledge a metis Garou unless that Garou is significantly higher in rank, and even then the metis might have to dominate the Talon somehow first.

Because the issue of metis in the tribe is so important, I asked Hears-the-Smallest-Sounds to give me an opinion, speaking as a leader and a Philodox:

The metis are not true wolves. They cannot mate, they are deformed and imperfect, and have nothing to offer the Garou nation except their prowess in battle.

But, metis do learn Gifts that no other Garou can know. They often know more about the lore of the Garou than wolf or human-born, because they have lived all their lives among Garou. They cannot pass on their knowledge to their own cubs, but perhaps they have something to teach others'. No, the metis are not true wolves — but I think that they are true Garou.

Lupus

The Talons would like to think that they define the lupus breed, and most tribes would agree, but that's not the whole story. The Talons try to be wolves, not lupus Garou, and there's a difference. That causes some unspoken friction between Talon lupus and those of other tribes, but the Talons still feel more comfortable around other lupus, so they usually just ignore that tension.

Other tribes' lupus sometimes make pilgrimages to Talon septs, I'm told, to learn how to truly reconcile being Garou with being lupus. I'm not lupus, so I couldn't be sure how well that works. All I know is that I've never found an easy way to balance being human and a werewolf. You just kind of learn how to do it, or you pick one side and exclude the other. I'm pretty sure that's how it would go for lupus, too, but I wonder how good the Talons are at demonstrating balance.

Talons and the Other Garou

The very first thing I discovered about the Red Talons, unsurprisingly, was their opinions of others. The Talons tend to be quite vocal about such opinions, when they have them. Begin a conversation, even in the Garou tongue, about the Pure Tribes with a European Red Talon present and she'll likely go to sleep rather than join in. On the other hand, any discussion of humans (or even homids) will likely draw some strong words from a Talon, because they are taught from their Rite of Passage on to have opinions about the "apes."

Naturally, not all Talons feel the same way about the tribes, the Fera, or anything else. I asked the same sorts of questions to various septs of Talons, as well as any individual Talons I chanced to meet, and tried to find whatever common ground there was. I was not often in any position to take notes, but I did try to provide choice quotes from the Talons to illustrate such common ground. Many of my quotes come from Hears-the-Smallest-Sounds.

Tribes

The Red Talons have an unenviable place in the Garou Nation. Like the Children of Gaia, their philosophies don't fit in well with the modern world. Like the Bone Gnawers, their beliefs make them unpopular with the other tribes. Like the Get, they are often seen as vicious and bloodthirsty.

But for all that, the Talons have a grip on something that the other tribes cannot touch. They have a purity that we cannot explain. I believe it is because the other tribes have become too complicated — we base ourselves on human cultures or beliefs, rather than the Litany of the Garou or the spirit worlds or any of the other concepts unique to the Garou. The Talons, however, are wolves, and that is what makes them a tribe. It also often makes the other tribes nervous.

Black Furies

The Furies and the Talons are both staunch defenders of the Wyld, and that kind of camaraderie often breaks through the boundaries of breed and sex. Also, Black Furies have protected their lupus Kin and tried to keep their wolf breed healthy over the years (and been more successful than some), which earns them a lot of respect from the Talons.

What friction there is between the two tribes tends to come from the Talons' view of humans. Many Furies spend their lives defending humans, and the Talons see this a waste of energy.

Hears-the-Smallest-Sounds has this to say about the Furies:

The Black Furies lent us their aid when this caern was attacked some time ago, but then asked for our assistance in freeing some humans from captivity some days' run from here. We could not help them to free or aid humans, and they became very angry with us. I do not understand why; the Litany required them to help us defend a caern, but says nothing about aiding apes.

Bone Gnawers

I admit that I don't think much of the Bone Gnawers myself, and the Red Talons often echo that attitude. They see the Gnawers as *urrah*, as dogs who have abandoned their wolf heritage to live among humans and filth. Most Red Talons live by the adage "Don't shit where you eat," and to them, Bone Gnawers do exactly that by living in shit to begin with.

A Red Talon Ragabash from New York (the state, obviously, not the city) who had spent time in a pack with a Bone Gnawer had this to say about them, however:

Rat-Tooth-yuf smelled awful like oil and smoke, wore human clothes that reeked of vomit, and spoke in human-tongues too much. But when our pack had to venture to the city, he taught me how to act human so that I would not put our pack in danger, and when the Black Spiral Dancers attacked our pack, he saw them first and hurled himself into battle first. Rat-Tooth-yuf is a loyal packmate and true Garou, and I will defend him as I would any wolf.

Children of Gaia

The Children are hard to peg, really. Sometimes they act like peaceniks and sometimes they're the toughest bastards around. I can wrap my head around that, but the Talons like things nice and simple, so a Red Talon's first experience with the Children (or the first thing she's told about them) tends to form her entire opinion, for better or worse. Commonly, that's either "honorable warrior for Gaia" or "human-loving whelp."

Hears-the-Smallest-Sounds' opinion on the Children of Gaia:

Mercy is a respected (if not widely practiced) trait among humans. Among wolves, and in general throughout the natural world, this is not so. A merciful predator would starve. A merciful prey would sacrifice itself to feed a hungry predator, and would not sire children. The Children should learn that the world is not merciful, and they cannot be either if they wish to survive the world.

Fianna

The Fianna and the Talons have strained relations, largely because the Fianna derive so much pleasure from food, drink, and (ahem) recreation. It's not that the Talons don't appreciate those things, but they don't make the big production out of them that the Fianna tend to, and see such emphasis as "too human." However, since Fianna lupus can produce howl-songs of unparalleled beauty and complexity, sometimes the two tribes do find common ground. More often, though, homid members of the tribe find Red Talons standoffish and blunt (though, for their part, Talons think homid Fianna talk too much).

Hears-the-Smallest-Sounds on the Fianna:

A Fianna pack once stopped at the Blue River Caern for a night before using our moon-bridge to go home to Ireland. They complained of boredom, so we invited them to go hunting with us. That was not agreeable. We howled stories for them, but they did not understand them well. Finally, they built a fire and drank poison until they could barely walk. In the morning, they said that the Talons didn't know how to have a good time.

Get of Fenris

The Get and the Talons share one major thing in common — bloodlust. That's what I was taught before my Rite of Passage, that these two tribes were great warriors but little else. That always seemed too simplistic for me, though.

The Red Talons, sad to say, look on the Get in much the same way they do the Fianna: As Garou who let their human side sway them. The Red Talons don't see "berserker rage" as something inherited from the wolf. After all, wolves don't fly into frenzy and kill anything that moves to the exclusion of their own safety. Wolves are predators, and predators fight to survive, not for glory. So, while the Talons respect the Fenrir's strength, they also remain wary of them.

I think Hides-in-Leaves, a Talon Ragabash I met in Germany put it best:

The Get smell and act like rabid wolves much of the time. Any jest, any playful bite might set them off. Their homids are sometimes more even-tempered, but their metis see it as an honor to die for Gaia. For the metis, perhaps it is, but I don't wish to be taken with them!

Glass Walkers

And here's where things get unpleasant.

The Glass Walkers are predominantly homid. They are, in many ways, the polar opposite of the Red Talons — they protect and encourage humanity, they see their wolfish side as inconvenient, etc. It's not hard to imagine how this makes the Talons feel. The Glass Walkers are, to the Talons, *urrah*, and that's about the most complimentary they'll ever be towards them. In fact, because the Glass Walkers' tribal name has changed over the years, some Red Talons just called them the Weaver-Rutters and let it go at that.

Some Red Talons assume that Glass Walkers deliberately shun their wolf side the way that the Talons do their human side. That's not true, of course, but it's interesting to watch a Red Talon around a Glass Walker lupus. The Glass Walker tends to fall into "omega" posture faster than you can say "pathetic housetrained excuse for a predator."

I made the mistake of mentioning the Glass Walkers to a Talon Ahroun in the Pacific Northwest once:

Those damned urrah had their chance to be true Garou, back before the humans shit all over the planet. That they have learned to enjoy the smell does not correct their mistake.

Shadow Lords

Ouch. The first reaction I got from a lot of Talons when they heard my tribe was, "What does he want?" The Shadow Lords have a bad reputation. Our "ends-justify-the-means" philosophy has cost us points with every single tribe, and for the Red Talons, to whom a slight happened "some time ago," that can be damned problematic.

Just lately, though, things are looking up as Shadow Lords the world over have been taking their cues from the Margrave. He's forged successful alliances with the Talons in Europe, and the message being sent is: The Lords can be trusted, and even followed. If the Fangs fall (and I'm not wishing that, understand, I'm just saying "if") then the Lords might be what keeps the Red Talons from wandering off into the woods alone — or worse, going to war on humanity.

Hears-the-Smallest-Sounds died before the Red Talons and the Shadow Lords joined forces in Eastern Europe. Swift-as-the-River, another member of the Blue River Sept, said this when I spoke to him after the caern's destruction:

The Shadow Lords fought bravely in battle beside Red Talon and Black Fury. They suffered battle scars, but won the fights. Afterwards, they howled as loudly as any Talon in victory. Perhaps we only distrust the Lords because an alpha said we should?

Silent Striders

The Silent Striders worry the Red Talons greatly. They have no real territory, they don't look or smell much like wolves, and they truck with ghosts (willingly or no). When they show up, they almost always bring bad news, and while most Red Talons know enough not equate the messenger with the message, some of them don't think that way. Throughout most of the world, the Talons look at the Striders as flawed somehow — after all, the Talons still have some of their homelands.

In Africa, however, things are somewhat different. The Kucha Ekundu respect the Silent Striders almost to the point of reverence, especially after Walks-with-Might helped engineer the Ahadi (more on this later). I imagine this is because on the flatlands of Africa, catching prey is mostly a matter of speed, and nobody beats the Striders in a foot race.

Hears-the-Smallest-Sound has this to say about the Silent Striders:

Wolves are predators. Jackals are scavengers. The Silent Striders are something in between, and the stench of carrion follows many of them. I trust the Striders, but I do not trust what follows them.

Silver Fangs

The Red Talons view the Fangs as the "alpha-tribe" in many places, or at least that's what they say. But many Talons have never even met a Silver Fang. They've heard stories of the Fangs' greatness — we all have — but all of those stories go straight out the window if the first Fang a Talon meets is crazy, stupid, or inbred. Pedigree goes a long way, but Talons won't always follow a leader into certain death based on it.

Note I said "always." In the olden days, if the Fangs needed a village purged or a rival sept attacked, they'd call in the Talons. One Silver Fang leader standing amidst the pack in Hispo form acting like an alpha could rally the Red Talons to action in a heartbeat. Who knows how many Talons died in service to Silver Fang agendas? (I've heard plenty of stories, but I admit that given my sources, my information may be a bit biased.)

Lately, though, the Talons are waking up to these unpleasant facts. In part of the world where there's a "ruling body" of Garou — Australia, for example — the Talons are looking more askance at the Fangs every month. I think that if the Fangs lose all credibility in the eyes of the Red Talons, the Garou Nation may lose another tribe.

While I was with the pack, I used to trash-talk the Fangs a lot. Not that I'd ever met one, of course — bigotry starts at home, damn it. Snow Runner put me in my place once:

Have you ever led a pack? Have you ever acted as alpha or been responsible for a pack eating, sleeping, mating, being safe from enemies or staying warm? Have you ever sired or taught a pup to hunt? I do not tell stories for you. You don't fight for me. We should not lead for the Silver Fangs.

Stargazers

The Stargazers tend to drive the Talons nuts. They love riddles, and the Talons couldn't care less. They like to expand their human-minds, and the Talons couldn't care less. However, they do see eye-to-eye on one topic: The Weaver.

The Stargazers (and I know this because I heard stuff secondhand from a Hakken tribemate) have spouted off that the Weaver is a bigger threat than the Wyrm for years now, and of course, that's pretty much how the Talons feel, too. If the two tribes get past their initial differences, which more commonly happens with Stargazer lupus, they can come up with some impressive ways to knock the Weaver down a peg.

Trouble is now, of course, the Stargazers have retreated back into Asia, and a lot of Talons see that as "slinking off with tail between legs." Also, since most Talons have never met a Stargazer, they fact that the 'Gazers left is all a Talon is likely to know.

I only ever visited one sept that hosted both Red Talons and a Stargazer. By the time I visited, the Stargazer had left to return to Asia, but I spoke with Strange-Smile, a Red Talon Theurge about him:

Mark Roar-of-the-Sea was our Caller of the Wyld for some time. The spirits listened to him, the elders listened to him, but his voice put the Talons to sleep.

Uktena

The Talons have a strange relationship with the so-called "Pure Ones." Supposedly the Talons were in the Americas before the rest of the European Garou, and had bred with native wolves and even founded some caerns before the rest of us showed up and ruined the world. But for the most part, the Talons have the same problems with the Uktena and the Wendigo as with the Fianna: Too much attention to their human Kin.

The other thing about the Uktena in particular is their penchant for secrets. Now, I know I'm one to talk, but when a Shadow Lord has a secret, you'll never know it. When an Uktena has a secret, he'll act smug about it, and that kind of behavior annoys the hell out of the Talons (they see it as lying).

One the other hand, though, the Uktena stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the Talons in the American Southwest trying to save the remaining Mexican wolves, and in some cases, the Uktena have taken the Talon's way of doing things to heart. I happen to know that in Northern Mexico, the Impergium's had a resurgence, and the Talons have had help in pursuing it.

The sept to which Strange Smile belongs was actually founded by Uktena, so of course she had some things to say about them:

Our leaders here are Uktena. They lead by keeping the sept safe and protected, not by charging into battle, come what may. They lead like wolves, thinking for the entire pack, rather than their own glory. When a new threat arises, they investigate it themselves, cautiously and carefully. In fact, they often cannot rest until they learn all about it.

Wendigo

Much of what I said for the Uktena holds for the Wendigo, too. However, the Wendigo are fierce, bloodthirsty (literally) warriors, and for the real hard-line Red Talons, that's a point in their favor. For some Red Talons, though, that kind of rage makes them very nervous.

Cannibalism is a big taboo for Garou and for wolves. The fact that the Wendigo follow a cannibal spirit and that homid Garou fly into cannibalistic frenzy in the Thrall of the Wyrm doesn't escape the Red Talons. Sometimes the Talons and the Wendigo fight happily alongside each other, killing white folks off if they venture onto native lands or too near a caern. Other times, the Talons tread carefully on Wendigo territory, never sure of what the natives will do next.

While visiting the Sept of the Weeping Daughter in Alaska, I spoke with Moonbeam-Runner, a Philodox who once acted as an emissary to the Wendigo Sept of the Cold Sun:

The Wendigo always have warm places to sleep and plenty of bloody meat. But I always sniff the meat carefully before eating.

Black Spiral Dancers

I know they aren't a Gaian tribe, but a couple of points need raising here.

I mentioned earlier that the mistake that cost the lives of three Garou — one a Talon — was mine. Actually, I called it a "miscalculation." I assumed that the Dancers were stupid and insane, and that if I used the Call of the Wyrm, they'd come charging right into an ambush.

It didn't work out that way, and I won't go into the details, largely because I don't remember any of them well. All I do know is that when everything seemed hopeless, Snow Runner jumped into the battle and went berserk (literally). She tore apart *four* of those Wyrm-ridden bastards before they brought her down. Meanwhile I was trying to figure out how to get out alive (which, obviously, I did).

When I went to her home sept, after I was finally allowed to talk with some of the Garou there, the Ahroun who trained her before her Rite of Passage told me why she acted the way she did:

The humans, as much as we hate them, do what they do because of a mistake made by the Triat and Gaia. The Black Spiral Dancers do what humans do and worse, but they do it deliberately. We may hate the humans for being blind, but the Dancers have their eyes open and their nose to the wind as they take their claws to Gaia.

Another thing about the Talons and the Dancers that I've picked up over the course of my travels: They'll never admit it, but they have a "there but for the grace of Gaia go I" kind of mentality about the fallen tribe. It would be all too easy for most Talons to give in to Rage and join the Dancers, or fall to the Wyrm, and it's a rare Talon who isn't tempted by the notion at least once.

Red Talons and the Fera

I myself have had limited experience with the Fera. I met a Corax once in a European sept, but beyond that, my experience is limited to what I know from stories. However, I did manage to run across quite a few Red Talons with experience in dealing with the other Changing Breeds.

The Talons are often confused about the Breeds, and in the past have been sucked in by the propaganda that the Silver Fangs and other tribes (mine included) have spread about them. As much as it would be tempting to say that since the Talons are so immersed in their feral side, they wouldn't have followed the human-like jealousy and lies that precipitated the War

of Rage, it's not that simple. To the Talons, the other Breeds are rival predators, and so when the time came to rally support in the War of Rage, the Fangs knew what buttons to push.

Ajaba

I spent some time with the Kucha Ekundu in Africa and they told me of the werehyenas. I didn't believe it at first, but their Galliards told stories that didn't vary much from sept to sept, so I'm starting to think that there might be a breed of Fera that most of the Garou Nation doesn't even know about out there. Evidently these Ajaba are beginning a comeback from the brink of extinction and are fairly capable warriors.

Now, what would it do for the Red Talons' worldwide reputation if they could help save a Changing Breed from annihilation, and present them to the Garou Nation as a new force in the war against the Wyrm?

Ananasi

The Red Talons haven't run across any of the alleged werespiders any more than the rest of us have. I'd guess that's because, being Weaver-spawn, they would stick to the cities. You can guess how that makes the Talons feel about them.

Bastet

The werecats, on the other hand, do have some history with the Talons and it's not very pretty. In North America, the native Bastet (pumas and lynxes, I believe) actually got on fairly well with the native Garou for while. The Red Talons didn't cross paths with the Bastet much then, nor do they now, but when it happens, someone usually ends up dead. I met a Red Talon Galliard called "Lynx-Killer" once, and he told me how he got his name and what he thought of the Bastet:

I found a werelynx once eating a rabbit in my sept's hunting grounds. I growled and threatened it; it rolled over on its back and batted its paws at me. I took on the Hispo form and bared my teeth; it mimicked my movements. I stood on two legs in the war form and warned it to leave the Talons' lands; it took on the human form and mocked me.

I struck once, and its head fell to the ground.

The so-called "Eyes of Gaia" are blind, indeed. I would never have given the Bastet any warning had I known how stupid it was.

Of course, this attitude isn't exactly universal. In Africa, the Kucha Ekundu (whom you'll find are the exceptions to the tribe on a lot of topics) get on well

with most of the Bastet, from what I'm told. But then, Africa's Fera are supposedly in a loose coalition now anyway, so it could have more to do with that than with the Kucha Ekundu specifically.

Corax

Raven has acted as totem to countless packs of Garou over the years, and the Red Talons recognize Raven as a patient and knowledgeable spirit. As for the Corax, they bring news to Talons septs just like any other sept, and they're scavengers, not true predators, so the Talons don't feel threatened. The Red Talons don't mind using sneak attacks and taking down enemies with overwhelming numbers ("fair fight" is a human concept, after all) so they're happy to partake of whatever information a Corax is willing to give them.

The only friction is that Corax are damned talkative. And Red Talons don't really go in for chitchat. However, on the whole I've seen both groups make concessions for the other's foibles.

Gurahl

There's some really bad blood between the Garou and the Gurahl. I think we all know that. And whether or not the Red Talons follow the party line of "the War of Rage was just, because the werebears were evil corpse-raising monsters" depends *entirely* on what sept you're in.

In some places, notably in Europe where the Red Talons are still in relatively close proximity to the Fangs and the Lords, you'll find Red Talons who fume about the "Wyrm-bears." In the USA, however, the Talons hear more of the stories of the Gurahl from the Wendigo and Uktena, and so they get the "healer" version.

If you ever have to talk with Red Talons about the Gurahl, find out what the local Talons have heard before giving them your own opinion. Some septs of Red Talons will jump for joy at any news that the werebears might still be around, some of them will jump at the chance to correct that oversight.

Incidentally, I don't know that any Gurahl still live, but a Red Talon at a sept in Wyoming actually said something that gave me hope once:

Our Galliards howl of the Caern of the Deep Caves, that once was tended by a great brown bear. The story goes that she went to sleep, so far into the earth that no beast could find her scent, but that before she did, she gave the caern into the care of the Red Talons. To this day, Great Bear watches over the caern and our Half-Moons are taught a special rite to welcome the she-bear back, just in case she returns.

Mokolé

Once again, it depends on where you are. But most Talons see the werealligators as Wyrm creatures. Not only are they rival predators, but they're reptiles (which means they smell weird) and they look a lot like what Wyrm-monsters are supposed to. Many Talons don't even know the word "Mokolé", but if they ever saw one, they'd assume the worst and attack.

In the sept in Louisiana that I mentioned, the wolves occasionally have trouble with alligators. No one's seen a Mokolé yet, but based on what Strange Smile told me, I'd say there's a damned good chance they will:

Sometimes we hear sounds from the swamps, like great bellows. Sometimes these sounds echo from the sea, as though huge beasts were singing to each other through the fog. Our sept leaders — Uktena, as I've said — are curious and wish to send a pack into the swamps to find the source. I hope they do not send a pack known for its skill in battle, for I think such a pack would not return.

Nagah

One interesting thing about the Red Talons is that they have historical roots in India, which is an area that most other tribes don't know much about. Because of those roots, the Talons actually know something about the Nagah — they were dancers. I spoke with Creeps-Past-the-Watchers, a No-Moon near a little village in East India, who had this to say about them:

The wereserpents were grossly mistreated. We sing old howls of them dancing, swaying back and forth with grace and beauty that none of our hunters could match. But remember why the serpent dances, and that she cannot hear the music.

Nuwisha

The Red Talons don't really think much of the werecoyotes. They don't see "wise Trickster." Normally, they see "cowardly pseudo-wolf that makes off with our kills and eats garbage." Most of the obtuse tricks the Nuwisha pull either go right over the Talons' heads or insult them because the underlying message seems to be "think like a human and you'll figure this out." That's not a good way to teach the Talons anything.

Nuwisha are supposedly Gaia's sense of humor. The Red Talons file humor squarely under the "human-mind" section of themselves, and therefore don't trust it (at least the younger ones don't). A Nuwisha who focuses more on "play" and teaches lessons that have direct, practical applications would get farther with the Talons, I'd guess.

Ratkin

Wolves eat rats and mice. Red Talons despise the cities, which is where the Ratkin live. Ratkin spread disease and they're terminally bad-tempered. The Talons and the wererats do not get along, but they really should. Why? Because both of them are so darned pissed off at the human race.

I can't believe I'm writing this down, but if the Red Talons ever took advantage of the Ratkin's numbers and position within every major city — if the two groups ever decided to learn from each other — the human race would be in some serious shit. It would require some major lateral thinking on both groups' parts, but it's not out of the realm of possibility.

Rokea

Wolves don't normally frequent the coastlines, and the weresharks don't normally go inland. Only place I've met Talons who ever know about the Rokea was in Europe, and even then all they knew was that the Rokea existed.

Red Talons and Other Creatures

The Talons don't see the vampires and the human mages as much as some of the other tribes do, because they stick to the wilds. All that means is that they see monsters the likes of which us homids couldn't imagine. Fomori in the bodies of giant bears, materialized spirits from Gaia-knows-what part of the Umbra, Wyrmholes that have festered for decades because nobody ever goes to that part of the forest — the Talons deal with all of that as a matter of course. Just bear that in mind if you think they've got it easy because they don't live in the cities. The cities provide protection we don't think about, and in the woods, all bets are off.

Vampires

Sometimes the bloodsuckers do visit the forests, I'm told. Some of them can even turn into wolves, just like the legends. Guess what? The Talons aren't fooled. Remember, a good part of the wolf "language" is scent, and, to my understanding, the corpses can't produce it. Any undead wolf that comes within olfactory range of a Red Talon pack is probably going to be torn to pieces.

Here's a scary story, though. I heard once about a pack of Red Talons that found several vampires wandering in their woods. They were all set to kill them, but then some Ragabash brought up the fact that these things kill humans. So the Talons grabbed a family of people who happened to be camping nearby and lashed them to some trees where the bloodsuckers would find them. The vampires, apparently starving, drank them dry, so the Talons let them go back to the city.

I should say, however, that I heard that story third hand from a Bone Gnawer who heard it from a bum who overheard some people (apparently vampires) talking. The Bone Gnawer filled in some gaps in the story

(obviously, neither the bum nor the vampires knew about "Red Talons," and who knows what vampires would be doing in the woods anyway?) but even if it's half true....

Magus

Strange things happen around caerns. Odd flowers grow, strange mushrooms sprout up, and some of these things can be used as "magical ingredients." Trouble is, harvesting them can weaken the caern, if done carelessly. Spellcasters are human, which means that Talons assume that they're going to be careless from the start.

When I visited Poland not long ago, I visited a Talon sept where the moss that grew near the center of the caern was an odd violet color. The Talons just said it had always been that way, and that sometimes humans came looking for it. The most recent human to do so, they said, called up fire when the guardians attacked him and then vanished, screaming in pain. The Red Talons just assumed that Gaia had taken offense at his behavior and struck him down. Sounds about right to me.

The Dead

The Red Talons kill people. That's a harsh, uncomfortable fact (and one I'll discuss more later on) but they do. And sometimes those people don't fade, but stick around as vengeful spirits, or worse. Most Red Talon ritemasters learn a special rite that very few Garou outside the tribe know about. It repels human ghosts but does nothing against the more familiar spirits (including Banes, unfortunately). Red Talon lore holds that they learned the rite from the Silent Striders following that tribe's exile from their homelands, but no one's really sure (and of course the Talons don't really care much where they learned it).

The problem is that dead humans don't always stop at ghostly hauntings. Sometimes they come back bodily as well, and that rite does nothing to stop such horrors. Of course, as these "zombies" have bodies, the Talons can respond to such a threat in the normal way, but I've heard stories about walking corpses healing claw and fang wounds in seconds and calling up storms and winds. I've also heard that if one finds the beings responsible for its death, it is utterly relentless in tracking it down and killing it. I visited a Red Talon sept whose bawn bordered a small town in Wyoming. The sept was holding a Gathering for the Departed when I arrived, for a young Ahroun torn to pieces by a human he'd killed not a month before. The Talons had no plans to investigate this. They were all terrified, because one of their most basic precepts — humans and weak and easy to kill — had just been utterly destroyed. I imagine it's the same anywhere a dead human returns for revenge.

Hunters

Something else, too, on the subject of not-so-helpless humans. I heard a story about a Red Talon pack that came across a group of humans hunting on their lands. They attacked, of course, and found that not only were the humans prepared, they wielded strange powers that forced the Talons back and held them at bay. The humans also carried silver in the guns, and killed two Talons before the rest of them got smart and disappeared.

They harried those "hunters" for three days, keeping them away from the caern's center and picking them off when they could. When they finally killed the last one, their Theurges examined the bodies with every Gift and fetish they had access to. Those "hunters" were human, completely and unequivocally.

Red Talons and Humans

Now that I've talked a little about Red Talons and their relations with the tribes, the Fera, and some of the other strangeness out there, I feel that the reader probably has a good sense that the tribe isn't perfect or a collective paragon of what it is to be Garou. Likewise, they've avoided some of the mistakes the other tribes have made. But most Garou know the Red Talons as dedicated human-haters, and before I get deeper into their culture, it might be a good idea to address that side of them.

Red Talons kill people. Actually, most Garou do, or have, or would if necessary. I have, and I'm sure the reader has as well. In fact, the first living thing I ever killed, other than the occasional mosquito, was a person, during my First Change. Rather than relate the story (which really isn't relevant to the Talons), I'll just say that ending another human life pushed me into a spiral of guilt and grief that lasted... well, really, it hasn't ended. And the guy wasn't an innocent bystander, either, but that's not the point. There's something in the human mind that's wired against killing other people. Yes, that impulse to preserve life gets ignored with amazing frequency, but it's there, even if most folks who kill don't admit it. A lot of "normal folks" (that is, humans who aren't soldiers, cops, etc.) who kill, even in self-defense or by accident, end up in therapy or dead by suicide. The impulse to preserve human life is very strong among humans.

Red Talons do not have that impulse. Not only that, they are taught from the time they undergo their First Change that killing humans is a necessary adjunct to what we as the Garou do. If the other tribes don't know that, that's too bad. But, the Talons are told while still bristling from that first bout of Rage, if you find yourself on a mission and there are humans around during a fight, don't feel compelled to protect them, or even to let them leave the area alive. And most of them, trying to make sense of what's happening and coping with the sudden ability to retain information and obey long-term principles, take that to heart.

In the Talons' defense, humans are responsible for a lot of their troubles. Wolves have been slaughtered for centuries or longer, humans defile the Earth, and so on. The Red Talons firmly believe, with more conviction than any fundamentalist on the planet, that if every last human were destroyed, Gaia would heal Herself and the Garou could just go back to being wolves. What the Talons miss, or perhaps just ignore, is that most Garou didn't start out as wolves. So would the Talons, if they ever achieved their goal, kill off the homid Garou, too? The usual response I got when I asked that question of Talons was something like "Of course not." But I could tell it wasn't something they'd ever considered.

If you have a Red Talon packmate, know that he would as soon kill a human being as look at him. By ending that life, the Talon sees one less human that will ever take a club or a gun to his cubs or Kin. The Talon does *not* see a mother or father, a child, a provider, or anything capable of love. The Talon sees only an enemy.

All Talons?

No. The narrator is speaking from his own experience, but we'll break in here and say that not *all* Red Talons display this kind of hatred towards humans. You are perfectly free to play a Talon who sees redeeming value in humanity, or who doesn't think that they all should die, or who just feels that fighting violence with violence is the wrong way to go.

But most Talons do indeed display this ferocity and this lack of respect for human life. And we recognize that this is a daunting and challenging proposition for any player. Part of the process of development for a Red Talon character can (and likely should) be the progressive realization that the fight to eradicate humanity is ultimately futile — but perhaps not. Perhaps you'd rather play a character that takes the hard-line stance to her grave. There are story possibilities in each. Just make sure to find out in advance whether the Storyteller feels that having a hardcore, human-killing Red Talon, or indeed any Red Talon, would derail the story.

Talon Culture

I used that phrase when I was telling a tribemate of mine about this project. She scoffed and asked if there was any such thing. The Red Talons absolutely have their own culture, it just differs considerably from any other tribe. They have their own form of storytelling, their own naming protocols, their own etiquette, and their own "take" on the Litany, the five auspices, and just about everything else in our society.

It took some time to get this kind of information about the Talons. They teach their cubs by example more than explanation, so finding Talons willing to have conversations about their tribe's beliefs and practices (to say nothing of doing so with a homid) was difficult. But persistence pays, and I hope the reader will find this enlightening.

The Pack

A Red Talon undergoes his First Change at about two years of age, roughly coinciding with sexual maturity (just like us homids, in other words). With luck, that change happens in an area not far from a Red Talon sept, but given how thin the tribe is spread these days, that's not a common occurrence. We all know what the First Change is like — the sudden bursts of anger, hunger, bloodlust, whatever. But I think that the human-born Garou have a distinct advantage in coping with it, just because we don't have the same battle against instinct that the lupus do. The First Change strips everything from a wolf. The pack won't accept him anymore, which means he can't mate (remember when the Change happens). He has to get used to hunting by himself all the time. Of course, the newly Changed Garou can dominate the other wolves easily, but unless the wolf was already an alpha (unlikely, given the age at which the Change happens) that goes against the Garou's instinct. Often, lupus Garou wind up wandering until another Garou finds them.

At any rate, assuming a Red Talon finds the cub, the training begins. Red Talons don't go through months of study about the nature of the spirit worlds and the history of the Garou. They pick it up as they go. Instead, they're taught to ignore certain of their instincts. Actually, it's less a matter of ignoring and more of reshaping — a wolf will fight to protect itself, but won't naturally attack and kill humans. The Talons work to make the new cub realize that by killing humans, he *is* protecting himself.

I don't know how much time passes between a Talon being "found" and undergoing his Rite of Passage. I never had the good fortune to arrive at a sept where a Talon cub was still in training and when I asked how long the period of "study" usually was, the typical answer was "some time." I imagine it varies by how sharp the cub is and what kind of instructors are available at a given sept. But when the instructors feel the Talon has learned enough, they commence with Rite of Passage.

Rite of Passage

Most tribes have certain rituals and observances that come at the successful completion of a Rite of Passage. Some tribes have very formalized rites, consisting of several distinct trials. Sometimes the Rite de-

pends on the sept in which it is performed. Most often, the cub leaves the sept and returns only when he has performed a specific goal, and that's how the Talons usually do it. Most often, that goal is in some way related to the sept's borders and protecting them. I've heard of Talons being required to safeguard a pack of wolves for a full month, and of others being asked to hunt down and slay the human responsible for the death of a favored Kin wolf (killing humans does factor into Talon Rites of Passages fairly often, I'm afraid).

The specifics vary, and the Talons don't exactly have centuries of unbroken, rigid tradition to dictate their rites. When the cub succeeds and returns to his sept, he is considered a true Garou. Sometimes the older Talons will carve pictograms into the cub's flesh, or so the stories go. However, I've seen comparatively few Talons with such scarification, so it makes me wonder where that story got started. Really, a Talon who hasn't passed a Rite of Passage would convey his status through body language so clearly that I don't think such practices would be necessary.

Joining a Pack

Uni-tribal packs are damned uncommon nowadays. They were the norm as recently as the late 19th century, but after the West was lost and Garou started dying faster than they were being born, multi-tribal packs became more common. The Red Talons, for quite a long time, held no particular opposition to sharing a pack with other tribes.

That might seem counter-intuitive given how distant they seem from the other tribes today. But remember that a large part of that distance comes from the fact that the other tribes don't have many lupus, and that wasn't always the case. In the old days (or so the legends go) it wouldn't be uncommon for a promising young Talon to be granted the honor of joining a Silver Fang pack, or for a lupus of another tribe to band together with a few Red Talons. As humanity has spread and conquered, however, the lupus breed has dwindled, which means that the Talons don't see as much in common with the tribes. Also, ideological differences get in the way (no other tribe really advocates killing humans wholesale, after all). Nonetheless, most Talons wind up in packs with members of other tribes. What happens then depends on the Talon.

One point of pride among the Talons is that they don't bicker over leadership — the fittest wolf leads and that's it. In a multi-tribal pack, the Talon may feel he's the best leader, but some of us other Garou might have other ideas. That's exactly what happened in my first pack (one Red Talon, two Shadow Lords, one Silver Fang, and one Fenrir). The Red Talon (Snow Runner, whom I've mentioned) felt that she should be pack leader because she was the Ahroun. The Silver Fang, who happened to be a Philodox, felt he should lead by dint of his tribe. The Get, thank Gaia, was a Theurge who knew her own limitations and admitted that she wasn't suited for leadership, and neither me nor my tribemate (our Ragabash) wanted to get between the two contenders. We all figured a good challenge was forthcoming. But it didn't fall out like we'd been taught.

Snow Runner didn't say, "I challenge you for leadership of this pack" or anything. She just said, "I'm alpha" and acted all dominant-like. The Silver Fang, steeped in his tribe's traditions since he could walk, got confused, and then said, "I accept your challenge." Snow Runner didn't even know she'd issued one.

They finally got around to fighting it out, Snow Runner won, and we all were a happy pack until my screw-up killed everyone but the Fenrir and me. But it served as a good example, in retrospect, of how the Talons behave — they expect the leadership issue to be a given, not something to fight over.

I've also heard of packs in which the Talon is *not* a leader and knows it, but feels that the Garou who assumes leadership isn't the best choice, either. If the Talon happens to be a No-Moon, he might be able to make his concerns known, but otherwise, he usually just swallows his concerns. This isn't good, though, as the "imbalance" in the pack weighs on the Talon and distracts him. There's really not much to be done — after all, there's more involved in pack leadership than simple strength or pedigree, especially in modern times where street savvy and diplomacy play such a role. But this does help to explain why the Talons are so keen to take breaks from their duties and visit their home septs — things make sense there.

Development

Talons do not remain ignorant of human ways for long if they run with a pack that includes homids. When duty calls a pack to even a small city, the Talon can't exactly wear a leash and pretend to be a setter — the difference between "dog" and "wolf" is pretty clear (not that many Talons would submit to such treatment anyway). So the Talon has to learn to mimic human behaviors.

One problem that faces Talons is that they change young. Most Garou do, of course, but the Rite of Passage also tends to take longer for homids. I've heard of Talons resembling thirteen-year-old kids when they assume Homid form for the first time, and a pre-teen hanging out with a bunch of rough-looking folks (especially since those folks tend to make the decent people nervous) may attract attention.

Even if that's not an issue, the Talon has some pretty serious problems. He's not used to not being able to smell everything in a quarter-mile radius and that's a bit like walking around wearing blinders. He's not used to having thought outweigh instinct — but it happens while wearing the Homid form. Clothes aren't usually too big of a hurdle, despite what you might think. The Talon discovers quickly that not wearing them leaves him cold, although modesty doesn't come easily (I've heard of one pack that had to get its Talon to wear sweats because he refused to zip or button any other kind of pants, claiming that "it didn't fit." It's enough to make a guy feel inadequate...). Language can be a bitch, especially if the Talon needs to learn English, which is a royal pain to learn except by immersion. Of course, all Garou speak the Garou tongue, but it doesn't sound like a language to a casual observer, and then we're back to the "Why are those scary people growling at each other?" issue. On that topic, Red Talons *look* scary in Homid form, and it's not just the Curse. They tend to hunch over, lope when they walk, and watch people just a little too closely. They look wild, which only makes sense, but it means that a pack with a Talon member should consider a hood or a hat (it'll help, if only a little).

Really, though, as long as the Talon doesn't actively resist learning about human practices, he'll figure it out. That doesn't mean he'll like it. That just means that he'll be able to "play human" without endangering his pack, which is the motivation that drives most Talons to make the attempt at all. Given about six months of occasional practice, Snow Runner spoke conversational English and could dress, eat, walk, and even dance like a human woman.

But it's the psychological changes that really throw the Talons for a loop. The biggest one has to do with asking "Why?"

Wolves in the wild don't consider reasons for events. They have a glimmer of understanding of "cause and effect", but it's on such a basic level that it's more part of instinct than anything else. When a Talon undergoes his First Change, he suddenly finds himself able to ask questions and understand abstract concepts — perhaps not very well, but the jump between "basic comprehension" and "none at all" is immense. The tribe doesn't teach the cubs about thinking like this, so a Red Talon who hasn't had much contact with other tribes (or with homid Garou in particular) is likely to follow orders from a superior

without question and to react instinctively to any perceived threat. Talons that run with multi-tribal packs, however, learn to ask questions.

It's a hard adjustment, demanding reasons for events when "just because" was once a good enough reason. But if another werewolf, especially one of equal rank, tells a Talon not to chase down a deer when the Talon is hungry, he experiences the odd sensation of questioning. This is different from curiosity, of course. The Talon wants to know *why* he can't have what his body says it needs. And the answer, which may range from "Because we're busy now" to "Because those humans might see you" might not satisfy the Talon.

This journey through cause and effect, questioning authority, and not being satisfied with "just because" sorts of answers is an important one, and one that can potentially never end for a Red Talon. If a Talon gets the idea that among other Talons, he doesn't have to consider such things (that is, it's only among those crazy homids that you'll get orders that need to be questioned), that's the end of it. If, however, the Red Talon realizes that he is fully capable of taking whatever data are at hand and drawing conclusions from it, we can say that he's balanced his wolf and human side.

Sounds simple, right? Not really. I've been Garou for a few years now. I've progressed to the rank of Adren. I've hunted on four legs and even masqueraded as a lupus-born Garou, and I can say for certain that the most basic truths of being a *wolf* (as opposed to a werewolf) still elude me. The Red Talons, more than any other Garou, even other lupus, know these truths from birth. They are more in tune with Gaia's harmony than any homid Theurge on his best day. The rare Talon who manages to think like a human and feel like wolf is formidable indeed.

As you might expect, Ragabash Talons tend to progress to the "why" stage a little faster than others, but even they don't always progress to the point of seeking out and deducing the answers themselves. That's very much an individual matter.

Names

A Red Talon really has two names. Among Garou, a Talon goes by her deed-name. Usually, this name comes from a Talon's Rite of Passage or a physical feature about her. Snow Runner, for example, gained her name on her Rite of Passage by running leading hunters away from her sept by running backwards in the snow to disguise her path. Some Talons choose their own "Garou names," some don't really care — they consider their howl names to be their only real names.

A Talon's howl name is really more than a howl. It incorporates elements of scent, body language, and touch to form a description of the Talon, rather than just an appellation. There's no way to record it all, which is probably the idea.

Glyphs

I said before that I found it strange, when I initially started my "study" of the wolf tribe, that they didn't shun the glyph language outright. Imagine my surprise when I heard the stories claiming that the Talons invented it! One of the tales that gets tossed around at Talon moots, in various incarnations, is that a Talon once upon a time slashed something or someone and made the three-clawed mark that now stages for the Red Talons (and that's awful close to they glyphs "rage," "war," and some other related concepts).

All seems rather weird, right, until you consider that the glyphs don't mean just one thing. Each glyph as it stands is originally descended from an image, not a concept, and that's how the Talons think. They don't study the glyph "alphabet." If they come to a glyph they've never seen, they guess. Nine times out of ten, they'll guess right. A Talon might never learn to read or write any human language, and he'll probably never use the glyph language to tell a story, but he'll know how to leave messages, warnings, and basic information with the glyphs. As far as the Talons are concerned, human writing is just a Wyrm/Weaver-corrupted form of glyphs. And who knows? Maybe they're right.

Auspices

The other tribes sometimes view the Red Talons as the "Ahroun tribe" as well as the "lupus tribe". But if every Red Talon is a warrior, it's because every Garou is a warrior. Each of the auspices is given its due credit in the tribe as a whole.

Now, notice I said "due credit." Some auspices are barred from becoming alpha among the Talons. Likewise, you'll rarely find a Talon Ahroun who knows much about speaking with spirits. The auspices are kept in their purest form in the wolf tribe, which I personally think should be the rest of the Garou Nation's model. If nothing else, a Talon is sure of his place.

Ragabash — The Invisible Moon

Red Talon No-Moons are never alphas. Instead, they get to challenge the alpha without getting smacked down all the time. The Ragabash's challenges aren't a matter of dominance, but of making sure the pack is doing what it needs to do — and making sure the alpha isn't leading the pack into certain death just because he happened to be the strongest wolf around.

On the new moon, the Talon hunts by smell. It's too dark to see, of course, so they rely most on their prey's scent to guide them. They call the new moon the

"Invisible Moon" to remind them that the moon is there, but hiding. When no moon shines down on Talon lands, watch out. The Ragabash are the most cunning, sneaky, and stealthy of the Talons, and on their auspice moon, they often patrol the bawn, looking for any interloper foolish enough to trespass. To the Talons, when the moon disappears, it's time to do the things you wouldn't want anyone to see. Most of the really brutal attacks on humans take place on the new, not the full moon.

Theurge — The Listening Moon

You'd have to go far afield to find a Red Talon Theurge as a pack alpha, but they hold sept positions frequently. Crescent Moons of the tribe are the ones who can grasp lateral thinking and are more comfortable with their "human-minds," which is frankly a must when dealing with other tribes or keeping humans away without killing them. They exhibit the typical curiosity of the Theurge auspice, but filtered through the feral instinct of a Red Talon. What this means is that these guys discover Gifts nobody's ever seen because nobody ever thought to ask.

When in the Umbra, the Theurge is beta, automatically (sometimes even alpha). Most Ahroun, of any tribe, feel rather out of their depth in the spirit worlds, and the Crescent Moons can often instinctively see through the weirdness presented there.

The Talons call the crescent moon the "Listening Moon" because there's enough light to see by, but to really get a bead on their prey, they follow sound. When the Talons hunt on the crescent moon, you'll never see them. They are usually hunting in the Umbra, rooting out any spiritual infestation on their land and scattering it to the winds. The other reason for the "Listening Moon" appellation is that Theurges are quiet Talons. They rarely offer opinions unless asked, they don't make trouble — but you can bet they remember what you say (verbally or otherwise).

Philodox — The Knowing Moon

If there's a time under the moon for the "human-mind" among Talons, this is it. Philodox are pack alphas just as often as Ahroun among the Talons, and are easily the most adept at picking up human behaviors and understanding human traits. That in no way makes them tolerant, however, it just means they won't usually go out of their way to kill wayward humans. If a human makes the mistake of crossing into Talon lands, it's the Philodox who decides if the human should die, be injured, or just scared out of his wits so he'll not return.

Philodox are respected among Talons because of their ability to move in these circles — Garou, human, etc. But they're Talons through and through. Don't ever mistake a Talon Philodox's command of a human language (for example) for "going native." Even suggesting human sympathies might be seen as a challenge. The Talons recognize the need to act as humans occasionally, just like they recognize the need to defecate. It doesn't mean they necessarily enjoy it.

Under the half moon, the Talons deliberate. Most Talon moots that have a specific purpose (as opposed to moots in honor of a caern's spirit) are held under the half-moon.

Galliard — The Howling Moon

As this is my auspice, I paid special attention to how Talon Galliards behaved. I expected Talon Galliards to be the loudest howlers in the sept. I didn't expect them to be as multi-faceted as they are.

The gibbous moon, to the Talons, is the time to revel in life. They hunt, they play, they howl their stories to the moon. The Galliards are rarely alphas, but they do have an important role in the tribe — they remember the details. They remember where a particular kill was made or where the prey gathers in the greatest numbers. They remember how many Talons fell in a given battle and what kind of foes they bested. They remember the scent of a traitor and the bearing of a hero. The Theurges may commune with the spirits of the forest, but the Galliards hear the howls of the ancestors and teach their lessons.

What Galliards *don't* do, however, is write. The Talons have a strange relationship with writing through the Garou's glyph language; they don't believe that it should be used to tell stories, but rather to convey warnings and record fact. A story changes with the teller, and the Talons think this is a good thing. Therefore, it's the Half-Moons that use the glyphs. Talon Galliards tell their stories with howls, scents, and body language, which means that the experience of "hearing" one of their stories is unique each time, no matter how many times you've heard it before.

Ahroun — The Seeing Moon

A Red Talon's rage is a terrifying thing. You've seen it if you've ever had a Red Talon packmate. The sheer, unbridled savagery with which they attack their foe is daunting. The Fenrir leaps into battle ready to die to take an enemy out with him. The Fianna charges on with a song on her lips. But the Red Talon attacks and goes straight for the throat, and to hell with "honorable combat" or "taking prisoners." To the Talon, it's all about winning, because the alternative is death. That doesn't mean they'll ignore the Litany or side with the "wrong elements" to win, because to compromise what it is to be a Garou or a Talon isn't an acceptable victory (and that's where a Talon's attitude differs from, say, a Shadow Lord's).

The Talons call the full moon the "Seeing Moon," which makes some sense. Under the light of the full moon, the Talons hunt proudly and visibly. They know that they can be seen, so they don't try to hide. A Red Talon Ahroun is usually the alpha of a pack, almost always the strongest wolf, and expects to be followed without question. But these leaders don't rest on their laurels. If a pack suffers a defeat, the alpha accepts the responsibility and does whatever is necessary to make restitution. If a pack member dies, the alpha often travels to that member's home sept to sing a dirge (hence my trip to Snow Runner's home sept).

All of that in mind, Red Talon Ahroun are dangerous. They are most often the Talons who hunt down and kill humans, just because they consider the ultimate defense of Gaia their role, and killing humans is, after all, a form of that defense. Talon Ahroun cultivate and revel in their rage, and they often fight smarter than Ahroun of other tribes. They don't want to inspire stories or win poetically. They just want to win the fight.

The Triat

The Talons know what we all know — the Wyrm is eating the world, the Weaver is badly out of control, and the Wyld is... well, the Wyld. But they see the possible causes and solutions a little differently than some of the other tribes. Right or wrong, who can say, but their beliefs definitely deserve consideration.

The Wyld

Let's dispel a myth: The forest is *not* the Wyld. It may be a Wyld place, in as much as it isn't of the Wyrm or Weaver, but the Wyld is pure chaos. The Red Talons rely on the patterns of the seasons, the prey migrations, the mating times, and so on as much as urban Garou rely on bus schedules. The Talons also know that the "Wyld" of the wilderness and the true, chaotic force of creation are very different.

The Talons don't understand the Wyld better than other tribes. They understand that the Wyld cannot be understood, and it took me forever to figure that out. Trying to put the Wyld into comprehensible terms is a little like trying to nail jelly to a tree. The Talons understand and accept that, and don't try to ascribe traits to the Wyld. That may be why they keep their spirituality so close and don't have occasion to question is much. Humans debate what color their God is, what His beliefs are, even "His" gender, for crying out loud. The Talons don't bother with this rather anthropomorphic shit. They know what the Wyld does, so who cares what it is?

The Wyrm

The Talons are slightly less realistic about the Wyrm, however. Most Talons believe that the Wyrm is made manifest in the heart of every single human on the planet. It doesn't matter if those humans live in concert with the world around them (which is rare anyway). It doesn't matter if those humans are Kinfolk to another tribe. If it's human, then the Wyrm has touched it and that makes it worthy of eventual destruction.

The Talons believe in fighting the Wyrm to the bitter end, make no mistake about that. However, they also believe that as long as humans rule the planet, there's no way to win. If every human was dead tomorrow, the Talons feel, then the Wyrm would lose its teeth and the Garou could destroy it.

Are the Talons correct? Well, the Wyrm's work is certainly being done by the humans, if you'll pardon my passive voice. But does that mean that the humans are *deliberately* doing what the Wyrm wants? Probably not. If every human on the planet died, I think we'd be facing such an immense spiritual upset that the balance of the world, such as it is, might never be repaired. But the Talons consider the humans just an extension of the Wyrm, so the notion that the humans have a place under Gaia doesn't usually cross their minds.

The Weaver

I said before that the Talons rely on patterns, just like all animals. But they consider those patterns — seasons, life and death, etc. — sanctioned by Gaia and instinctive, and therefore acceptable. The patterns that allow humans to build their "hives" and machines, to level forests and otherwise simulate the natural patterns, the Talons feel, are dangerous and ultimately blasphemous. The tribe feels that humans are the Wyrm's servants, but that the Weaver profits by the arrangement. Therefore, even if you convinced a Talon that the Weaver is a more dangerous foe than the Wyrm (not hard in and of itself), that Talon would still feel that the humans are the first thing to go, since they're the ones building all the Weaver-trash.

And, perhaps more importantly, the Weaver scares the holy bejeezus out of the Talons. What humans can do with their Weaver-stuff — fly, move at such great speeds, kill from afar, command fire, and so on — is beyond the ken of the Talons. They know that Weaver-spirits are usually spiders, and spiders are more efficient hunters than wolves. I heard a prophecy from a young Talon Theurge once. She said that she saw a great gray wolf, sitting proudly on a paved road, and all the cars swerved around it out of respect. But then a huge spider leaped on it from behind and spun it into a cocoon. She says that she periodically sees that vision, but has never seen the cocoon open or what the wolf might be changing into.

She seemed to feel the wolf represented the Garou Nation as a whole. I think it may be a bit more specific than that.

Totems and Spirits

The Red Talons follow Griffin as their tribal totem. I always thought it was interesting that they don't simply follow Wolf, but then, I've never heard of a caern or a pack that follows Wolf as a totem (Fenris is a wolf, but he's more War in wolf's clothing). I asked a Red Talon Galliard called Soft-Clear-Howl about this once, and she told me the following story:

All Red Talons follow the Progenitor Wolf, the Wolf-of-All-Tribes, in their hearts. Some time ago, all werewolves did so as well. But as the tribes formed and the world began to change, the Talons became the only tribe to follow Wolf thus, and the other tribes became jealous that Wolf paid such close attention to the Talons. They complained loudly to their own totems, and their totems became insulted and left them. Now without any spiritual guidance, the tribes turned to the Talons and asked them to give up Wolf so that all Garou might follow him again.

The Talons tried to explain that following Wolf was natural and couldn't be shared, but the tribes had become tainted with human blood and could not understand. They growled and threatened, and finally, the Talons gathered and called upon the Progenitor Wolf to ask his advice.

The Wolf said that the other tribes would not feel as though they were free to follow him as long as the Talons claimed him as their tribal totem. He then called upon Griffin, ever hungry, ever fierce Griffin, and bade him guide the Talons in battle and keep their predator's heart sharp and true in the years to come. And Wolf faded into the Umbra, refusing ever to serve as tribe, pack, or sept totem in his pure form again.

The other tribes each had to make amends to their totems, and each demanded a price, and this is why pack totems make demands of their charges. But Griffin makes no demands of his children, though he does shun human-born Garou, since they were the cause of all the trouble.

And there you have it. Doesn't cast the rest of us in a very favorable light, true, but I can see it happening.

Talons follow other totems regularly. Some of them are well known to other tribes (I've mentioned Raven already). Some are unknown outside the Talons, either because they don't get on well with non-lupus, or because the Talons don't see a reason to share their knowledge.

Griffin

The totem of the entire tribe is the world's greatest hunter. The Griffin hunts down his prey with the eyes of the eagle, rends it with the lion's claws, and eats with the wolf's hunger. Griffin doesn't like homid Garou, and that almost cost me my life once.

I mentioned before that I occasionally had to pass myself off as a lupus to get the Talons to give me the time of day. I did that once at a caern that Griffin watched as the totem spirit. I fooled the caern's warder, the master of the rite, and sept's leader — but not Griffin. I was trotting across the caern's grounds when something hit me from behind, pinned me to the ground, and hissed in my ear, "What are you doing here, two-legs?"

I thought I was screwed, that the Warder had found me out, but then I saw a feather fall to the ground in front of me. I told Griffin, "I'm here because a Talon died for my mistake and I want the other Garou to know about the tribe, because I think they are wiser than we." That didn't work. Griffin didn't care about making up for mistakes or other Garou. He dug his claws in. I said, "I'm here because the Talons may have the secret to winning the Apocalypse." He dug his claws in deeper; Griffin doesn't think that secret is a secret — he pretty much feels that killing the humans is the way to go. And then, right as I was blacking out from pain, I twisted underneath him, shoved upwards with all my strength, and jumped the hell clear of those claws.

He wasn't behind me, of course, but I knew he was around. I said, "I'm here for my own reasons, and just because I'm not a lupus doesn't mean I'm not a hunter."

Griffin left me alone after that. I'm not sure if he approved of my answer or not, but I got out of the sept alive and no one knew I was homid, to my knowledge.

Lion

As you may know, Lion was once the totem of the White Howlers. But when that tribe fell, the totem didn't fall with it. Instead, Lion slunk off, pride wounded beyond repair. The story is that Griffin went and found Lion and pulled him up by the bootstraps, as it were. Now he's a member of Griffin's brood, and sometimes acts as a pack totem.

Normally, Lion is very hidebound and tradition-oriented, but when he acts as a Talon pack totem, he exhibits his more predatory side (which means that Lion as pack totem is often female, as the lionesses do most of the hunting). Naturally, Lion is most revered by the Kucha Ekundu, though I'm told they're very careful about making that allegiance public. Of course, natural Cape hunting dogs and lions don't really get along, but then, neither do wolves and wolverines.

Mammoth

Mammoth isn't, of course, a predator, but Griffin has a soft spot for extinct animals. The Mammoth will sometimes act as a totem, but more often, will respond to a Song of the Great Beast. I actually saw that happen once when I was unlucky enough to be present when a Red Talon caern was invaded by Wyrm-forces. The battle wasn't going well, and the Talons needed reinforcements,

but there wasn't anyone nearby to contact. And then, suddenly, the Mammoth came crashing through the trees and started stomping on invaders, throwing them into trees with his trunk — it was really magnificent.

I've heard that Mammoth was once a favored totem of the Croatan, but that the great spirit went into hiding after the tribe fell and only the Talons knew anything about calling him up. I rather doubt that the Uktena don't have the same rites that the Talons do regarding Mammoth stashed away somewhere, however. For what it's worth, I hear rumors about Mammoth making appearances in the Appalachian Mountains, and the folks living up there finding his tracks and trying to sell them. Just rumors, as far as I know.

Sphinx

The Stargazers might like to think they've got Sphinx locked up, but that's really not the case. Sphinx is a member of Griffin's brood, and recently started getting back to her roots, so to speak. After the 'Gazers left the Garou Nation, Sphinx slowly started withdrawing from them and spending more time among the Red Talons. The result is pretty frightening.

Sphinx has always liked riddles, but has recently begun asking some pretty tricky ones that have exactly one right answer. If you don't get the answer right, the Sphinx considers you inferior and eats you. The theory goes that the Sphinx feels all predators should know these answers, and any that don't — Garou especially — deserve to be prey. The Sphinx acts as a kind of councilor to Griffin, checking Rage with wisdom, but given that Sphinx has gotten bloodthirsty of late, I wonder how that will affect the tribe's totem.

Wolverine

The Talons revere Wolverine. It's far and away the totem that the Ahroun of the tribe respect the most, apart from Griffin, of course. It's so vicious that the Talons are the only tribe who'd consider taking it as a pack totem (except for some Wendigo, and even then they revere a more humanized version of the spirit). Wolverine-packs frenzy at the drop of a hat, and will tear their opponents to shreds. They're also almost impossible to hurt.

Some Talons, however, recognize that Wolverine isn't the best totem to follow if long-term survival is a goal. Wolverine doesn't like strategy or discussion, it likes to keep its claws wet. A pack that follows Wolverine is the first to enter a battle, regardless of the odds.

Wolf of the Woods

The story goes, you'll remember, that Wolf doesn't act as a totem in his purest form anymore. But aspects of Wolf sometimes do, and this is where you'll find Fenris, the wolves that accompany the Wild Hunt, and the Wolf of the Woods.

I asked every Talon Theurge I met about this totem, and got the same answers each time. They all knew he existed, but had never met him. They all knew he was present in every Garou caern, but not as a totem. Reports varied on whether he acts as a pack totem or not, but one story that endured was that every so often, the Wolf of the Woods dies and chooses a Red Talon to "inhabit." That Talon, always a mature wolf who has yet to breed, disappears and becomes the Wolf of the Woods, never seen again by his packmates or sept, except in fleeting glimpses and scent marks.

Camps

All tribes have little mini-societies. Some date back millennia. Some started yesterday, but all of them are true members of their respective tribes with a slightly different take on how things should be done.

I'm almost embarrassed about this, but I know more about Talon camps than I do about those in my own tribe. But Talons aren't usually very secretive. They wear their opinions in the open. It isn't that they can't lie, but they can't do it while speaking (or, more accurately, communicating) in the "wolf language." So if you need to know whether a Talon fits into a given camp, ask. They might respond with "None of your business" but they won't lie to you.

A word on numbers: The Talons are dying out. If it weren't for the fact that most Talons fall into one of these camps, at least philosophically, they'd cease to exist. I happen to know that the Anti-Extinction Faction (or Whelp's Compromise, as it's known in most of the tribe) has dwindled to almost no members over the last few years.

Dying Cubs

Red Talons kill humans — I covered that before. But they kill them quickly and cleanly, ordinarily. Talons aren't much on torture, except perhaps the Dying Cubs.

This "camp" is the most like a secret society, in that they have their own rites and practices. They learned rituals from *somewhere* that allow them to "feed" the Earth with a human's pain, which means the longer they keep the human in pain, the more sustenance the Earth draws. That means that they'll drag out an unfortunate victim's death out for *days* if they can, sometimes healing him with Gifts so they can start over. They learn Gifts from pain-spirits, but haven't really scratched the surface of what they can learn, because the camp is composed chiefly of young Garou.

These guys are dangerous, and not just because they might grab the wrong human some day and bring down retribution on the tribe (or on the Garou in general). One nigh-universal truth I've learned as a

werewolf is "as above, so below." You get out what you put in. If these guys are putting pain and suffering into the lands, what do they think that does to the spirits?

I spoke with a Dying Cub in Canada. I won't use his name here for his own protection, but rest assured everybody who needs to know about him does know:

The last human who ventured here after dark took three nights to die. We used sticks, sharp rocks, thorns, teeth, claws, urine, fire, and finally his own jewelry. I'm not sure what finally killed him, but when he died, I heard the land sigh in satisfaction.

Lodge of the Predator Kings

All of the really nasty, vicious rumors that float around about the Talons can probably be traced back to this camp. The Lodge of the Predator Kings is made up of the Red Talons who want to see every human being on the planet dead. No compromise, no homid Kinfolk. All the humans gone. Maybe, in time gone by, there was a chance for humanity to redeem itself, they say, but that chance is long past. Now the only way for Gaia to have a chance to heal is to remove the creatures that continually injure Her.

Needless to say, this isn't a popular attitude among the other tribes. The Lodge doesn't care. Wanton slaughter of humans makes the Red Talons a target for any group of hunters, supernatural or otherwise, who can trace them. The Lodge doesn't care. They are beyond giving a damn about consequences, because they *know* they are going to lose. They realize how hopeless their fight is, and that makes them extremely dangerous.

During the Gulf War, I remember someone worrying that if Saddam got his hands on nukes, we'd be in trouble. He'd use them, the theory went, because his religion taught that if he died in service to God he'd end up in Heaven. The Predator Kings are much the same. If they die doing "Griffin's true bidding," they'll go on to a greater reward, or so the Theurges in the camp assert.

Finding a "member" of this camp isn't difficult. They aren't very secretive. I spoke with one called Blood Rain at the same sept as Strange Smile:

Our sept leaders allow humans inside the bawn. They claim they have no choice. They claim that the forest is protected by human laws. They claim that they humans cannot stay past dark and will never disrupt our moots. I know a better way to keep the humans from disrupting our moots. Our sept would make a fine place from which to bring the Impergium again. Perhaps you could convince the elders of this?

Warders of the Lands

Not really so much a camp, the Warders are as close to "moderate" as a Talon gets. The Warders tend fall somewhere in between the philosophies of the Predator Kings and Whelp's Compromise. Most of them won't hesitate to kill a human if necessary, but they don't think that wholesale slaughter is the way to go.

However, the reasons for this vary. Some of them don't see humans as a tremendous mistake of Gaia and think that, if there weren't so darned many of them, they could be kept under control. Some Warders, though, just think that the Garou don't have the *means* to kill all of the humans, so another solution needs to be found. But what if the Garou had some sort of quasi-nuclear weapon that could kill off humans but leave the rest of the animals intact? I think many Warders would be very happy about it. In general, the Warders of the Land are the more realistic Talons, but they're still Talons.

Most of tribe falls into this camp, philosophically at least. Hears-the-Smallest-Sounds was definitely a Warder of the Land:

Human beings rule the planet. They are not Gaia's chosen rulers, but yet they rule. No matter how loudly we howl, that does not change their numbers or power. No wolf can fell a tree — we must instead find a way around it.

Whelp's Compromise

Here's where the real friction in the tribe comes from. No Talon will *ever* identify himself as being a "member of Whelp's Compromise" — they consider the title as insulting as it sounds. Other tribes call this camp the "Anti-Extinction Faction" and it's usually looked at as the "Talons who don't want to kill all the humans," but there's more to it than that. These Talons find redeeming value in humanity. Sometimes they're born in captivity or have had experience with humans who are trying to save wild wolves. Sometimes they just see something — a mother and child, a human trying to clean up the landscape — that makes them think twice about killing them all.

In short, these Garou believe that human beings are worth keeping around. That doesn't make them soft, though. Whelps will go after humans who defile Gaia with a vengeance that impresses even the Predator Kings. The underlying motive seems to be, "Do you realize what the rest of my tribe wants to do to you, and you're *still* throwing shit everywhere?"

I talked to a Whelp in Australia called Rage-in-the-Streets, who's unique in that he's gained some status among the Talons there. Worth noting, by the way, that he was a certified Predator King in his youth:

Look, the humans can learn. It just takes them some time. And a lot of what's wrong with them — in cities especially — you can blame on the bloodsuckers. Kill off the parasites and Banes and the other Wyrm-nastiness hanging over the humans' heads, and they'll catch on. It's a lot of work, yeah, but not any more than killing all of the humans off, right?

Winter Packs

Some of the information in this little treatise is stuff that everybody in the Garou nation knows. Some of it is sensitive enough that the Red Talons probably wouldn't *like* everybody to know about it, but it's not the end of the world if they did. And then there are a few facts that I'm really not supposed to know. The existence of the Winter Packs definitely falls into that latter category.

Recently (I can't give you a date — once again, the Talons are foggy on time) much of the tribe met in Alaska somewhere and decided that they needed to kick the war on humanity up a notch. That council became known, among the Talons, as the Winter Council. The major decision was that some of the Red Talons undergoing their First Change in the coming year would be specially trained from the outset to hate humans. They wouldn't see a human, they wouldn't hear about humans from other tribes. They wouldn't even be allowed to speak with a homid Garou. They would be taught only enough about humans to make them efficient people-killers. And then the various Red Talon septs would put these Garou together into packs and send them out into the world with specific instructions on killing humans (as in, they won't just charge into a city and start tearing people up). These "Winter Packs" haven't really gotten off the ground — there aren't that many Garou to go around, after all, and the Talons have to send *some* Garou out to the rest of the Garou Nation or else things look suspicious. But since all Talons are lupus, there's not only a *slight* chance that more than one Garou in a litter will breed true, but they'll know it in less time (two years or less, normally). So these Winter Packs do exist. I'm not sure how many there are or where they'd be located, or even what the overall mission entails. I've never talked to a Winter Garou, and what information I do have I bullied out of a spirit who was nearby during the Winter Council.

Really, I don't know what scares me most about the whole situation. Not only are the Talons taking drastic, immediate action towards their goals but they're being *subtle* about it. Makes me wonder whom they're learning from. It's not us — not to my knowledge, anyway.

The Litany

The tenets by which we all live… sort of. A bit of Garou history that some cubs just aren't taught anymore is that for a law to become Litany, all of the tribes had to agree on it. That means that when the "current" Litany was established, all sixteen tribes (because it happened before the War of Tears, the fall of the Croatan, and even the corruption of the White Howlers) had to agree, right?

History gets muddled occasionally. I'd be interested in knowing how the Bunyip took part in that debate, since the European Garou were so darned surprised to see them when Australia was "colonized." But be that as it may, the Red Talons don't consider themselves bound by the Litany. Let that bombshell settle before reading on.

According to Talon lore, the Red Talons weren't a tribe in the same sense as the other Garou. Instead, they were only bound by the fact that they refused to mate with humans, but didn't get the status of a tribe or the name "Red Talons" until after the Litany was finalized. Since they didn't get a vote, some them think that it's void where they're concerned. This attitude isn't universal among the Talons, but good luck trying to get a Talon in trouble on an infringement of, say, not respecting all beneath her. They just don't care, and some Talon Theurges know a rite that undoes the Punishment Rites that the other tribes like to use.

Each tenet of the Litany, therefore, has a different meaning to the Talons. Let's take it piece by piece — my take on the Litany as observed by the Red Talons, and then Hears-the-Smallest-Sounds' thoughts as well (as a Philodox, he had some strong opinions on the Litany).

Garou Shall Not Mate With Other Garou

Well, this one's easy, right? The Talons figure they've never broken this one, but as I said earlier, you could find a few Red Talon metis if you looked hard enough. In general, Talons mate as wolves do (when the bitches go into heat) so two Talons mating has other issues besides the Litany. Mating for desire's sake rather than to propagate the species, for instance. It isn't that the Talons disallow sexual desire in the tribe, but they see it as a function of the human-mind, and therefore distrust it.

Hears-the-Smallest-Sounds adds: I said before that metis are true Garou. That does not excuse the actions of their parents. A metis child has committed no crime and may grow to be a warrior for Gaia, if not a wolf. Two Garou that produce a metis have strayed from their tasks are neither Garou nor wolf. They should be punished accordingly.

Combat the Wyrm Wherever It Dwells and Whenever It Breeds

The Red Talons won't ever be accused of slacking on this one, I'm sure. However, they don't buy the underlying reason behind this tenet — the one about the Wyrm being the root of all evil. They blame the Weaver at least as much, and blame the humans more. When they fight the Wyrm, they do it because it's their Gaia-appointed task and because it's for their own safety, not because of the Litany.

Hears-the-Smallest-Sounds notes: The Wyrm served a purpose once, and the need for that purpose has not changed. If we were to blunt the Wyrm's teeth by destroying or corralling its favorite minions — humans — perhaps it would give up its quest for destruction. But the Weaver presents a greater threat, and it too uses the humans to do its work. Our choice of action should be clear.

Respect the Territory of Another

The Talons believe that the fact that someone had to write this tenet down and make it law is just proof that human ideals are corrupting the Garou. Talons keep their own territory very secure, and woe to any creature, Garou or not, who trespasses. But they see it more as "hunting grounds" than territory. The Talons don't believe in ownership; they hunt the land because they are stronger enough to keep other predators out. That's very different than saying, "This land is mine because my family lived here for centuries" or "I hold a deed."

Hears-the-Smallest-Sounds laments: We no longer hold the territory we once did, and the remains of our lands are unsuitable for us after humans build there. We need a way not only to reclaim our lands but also to destroy what the humans have wrought, that true life might begin again.

Accept an Honorable Surrender

In brief: Surrendering to Talon in a duel is usually safe, because dominance struggles are part of growing up for them. They also expect the same; a Talon who knows he's beaten will usually surrender and consider the matter closed.

Of course, "usually" is the key word here. A Talon given to bouts of rage (which is potentially any of them) might well fly into frenzy and not stop fighting until someone dies. This is a risk fighting any Garou, but don't think that a Talon's instincts will protect you.

Hears-the-Smallest-Sounds on challenge and surrender: Much of the time, a Talon will submit if he feels his challenger is truly stronger. However, when one challenger is a homid and knows little of how wolves express dominance, this is difficult for a Talon to gauge, which

leads some Talons into unnecessary challenges. Sometimes the other Garou need only change to Lupus form for the Talon to realize his mistake. Sometimes, a true challenge must take place. Other Garou often feel that there is some dishonor in losing a challenge, but the Red Talon does not. Any failed challenge is a lesson to the loser *and* to the winner.

Submission to Those of Higher Station

Once again, the wolf's instincts take over here. The purity of a Garou's pedigree factors into how much respect he'll get from any werewolf, but especially the Talons. Pure breeding triggers their "roll over" instincts (how else do you think the Silver Fangs have kept them in line?). But as the old lineages die out and as the Talons start to realize that simple breeding isn't enough to command respect, they're starting to pay less attention to this tenet. Within their tribe, an elder's an elder and is given due respect. Outside of the tribe, the elder had better be prepared to stare down the Talons or otherwise prove himself.

Hears-the-Smallest-Sounds notes: I've led many a moot in my time here, and while I do so, even the elders listen at my feet. But during a battle or where the protection of the sept is concerned, I would follow a cliath Ahroun if that Ahroun were a true leader. Any Talon can sense a true leader. Would that we could teach the other tribes.

The First Share of the Kill for the Greatest in Station

The Red Talons take this literally. The alpha eats first. They aren't big on looting bodies, so the "I'll just take this fetish off my fallen foe" thing that some other tribes do when citing this tenet doesn't come up much. Again, though, the fact that the other tribes needed to be *reminded* that the big wolf eats first saddens the Talons.

Hears-the-Smallest-Sounds agrees: The alpha is leader, and by allowing him to eat first, we show respect. Eating before the alpha is a challenge and should be treated as such.

Ye Shall Not Eat the Flesh of Humans

Here there's a bit of friction. The Talons remember the good old days when human flesh was clean enough to eat (I can't believe I'm writing this). Now, people eat a lot of chemicals, which doesn't stop the Talons.

It's true — they break this tenet regularly. In multi-tribal septs, they keep it to a minimum, but on their own, the Talons use humans as prey. If a Talon is caught with a snack, the tribe doesn't leave her out in the cold, either. They'll hide her and protect her as necessary, because they don't feel there's anything wrong with eating people, so long as the meat is cleaned first (and yes, they have rites for that).

Talons are lousy liars (and I'm a damned good one), and every Talon I asked about eating people either didn't bother to lie or refused to answer. Once in a while, I got a "the meat is unhealthy and therefore we avoid it" response, but never once did a Talon cite the Litany as reason to not eat human flesh.

Hears-the-Smallest-Sounds shares some history: Humans were once prey for all animals. They may have stolen the mantle of predator, but we know the truth. They are too weak to hunt on their own, and they reproduce too fast to be anything but prey. Prey might mimic its predator, but the truth always comes out when the prey is cornered.

Respect Those Beneath Ye — All Are of Gaia

The Talons understand the concept of "respect" once it's been explained to them, but they don't buy this tenet. The Talons are brutally honest, and that means that they won't extol a foe just because he was tough to kill. They don't respect humans. They have a form of respect for prey animals, but only inasmuch as they know the animal must die so they can live. Of course, the prey animal doesn't necessarily respect the animal that eats it, right? On the whole, the Talons discard this tenet as a human concept.

Hears-the-Smallest-Sounds puts a more Red Talon spin on this: Whatever the motives of the Garou who first sang this tenet, a Red Talon should respect everything under Gaia simply because it exists. This is a mistake humans make — they think that they are somehow special. They are not, and neither are the Garou, the wolves, or the Red Talons. All are indeed of Gaia. If we are to punish the humans for anything, it should be for failing to recognize that the world exists with or without them.

The Veil Shall Not Be Lifted

Most tribes see this tenet as pretty much inviolate. After all, if humans learned about us, they'd hunt us down, right? The Talons waver on this point, though. Again, most of them know that they've lost, that it's just a matter of time before the last wolves die. So, who cares if the humans know and come to kill us? At least then, the Talons feel, we could fight back with all available resources rather than skulking about in the shadows. A Talon who accidentally reveals himself to a human usually kills the human anyway, but I wonder how close some Predator Kings are to just charging into a city and letting Rage take hold.

Hears-the-Smallest-Sounds adds: The Veil protects humans from the truth of what we are — and what they are. I don't believe we owe them that protection, but we do owe it ourselves to keep our caerns and Kin safe. When possible, we should disguise our kills so that the humans do not begin slaughtering wolves any more vigorously than they do.

Do Not Suffer Thy People to Tend Thy Sickness

Wolves wander off into the woods to die. Talons who know the end is near do the same. They don't rely on their fellows to end their lives; indeed, that's considered a big taboo among the Talons.

If a Talon becomes diseased or tainted, however, and doesn't realize that his time has come, that's a different matter. The Talons of his sept or pack consider it their duty and sign of respect to hunt down and kill the sick werewolf. About the only time a Talon will tend a wound is where their wolf Kin are involved. They believe (rightly so) that their Kin are too thinly spread to lose any to accident, and will care for the wounded as long as necessary.

Hears-the-Smallest-Sounds shares his thoughts on the sick: What of a Garou in Harano? What of a Garou who is stained or wounded by a Wyrm-creature, but can be cured? Are we to lose warriors — and future warriors — to allow them the "honor" of dying alone and of not burdening us? The day that we no longer have time to care for our own will be a sad one, for we will act like callous humans rather than loyal and caring wolves.

The Leader May Be Challenged at Any Time During Peace

Another tenet that the Talons consider intuitive. They feel that the leader needs the occasional challenge to keep him strong. Some tribes dodge this by saying that there is no longer any peace, but the Talons typically don't buy into that. Even the Talons have moments that aren't consumed by killing and hunting, after all.

The Leader May Not Be Challenged During Wartime

I've seen all-Talon packs fight. It's beautiful. They move in perfect concert, they don't try to outdo each other for glory or spite, each one does what he's supposed to do and that's it. They protect each other, and if the alpha gives an order, it's usually followed before he's done giving it. A Talon in a multi-tribal pack is in for a surprise. Snow Runner sure was the first time our pack got into a fight. The homids fight like they can take it all on by themselves, and nobody even paid attention to what anyone else was doing. I think we could all use another look at this tenet.

Ye Shall Take No Action That Causes a Caern to be Violated

The Talons may not buy into the Litany, but they sure as hell follow this tenet, to the point that a lot of Talon caerns don't even admit non-Talon (or at least non-lupus) Garou. Any human that sets foot anywhere near the heart of a Talon caern dies. End of story. They'll hunt him to the ends of the Earth if necessary, and I've seen it happen.

Hears-the-Smallest-Sounds died from Harano when his caern was poisoned. That's how strong the connection to the caern was for him.

The Wolves' World

The Red Talons might like to think of themselves as more wolves than werewolves, but they've made adaptations, too. I found Red Talons in places where wild wolves were once plentiful and places where their lupine Kinfolk never set foot. Over the course of my travel, I made some promises to keep the exact locations of septs and caerns secret. I've never been known for my ability to keep a promise, but I'm not giving directions. I'll give you a continent — which should be of some help.

North America

Quite a few Talons here, but then, it's a big place. The Red Talons aren't very forgiving of humans, but the Western American notion that wolves kill people and make off with livestock never struck the tribe as a good reason to go hunting for wolves. Go out West and you'll find Talons descended from Mexican wolves that are very confused by the fact that humans shoot their Kin on sight, and then other humans try to save them. (At least they recognize that the latter group exists.)

Farther east, I found Talons in the forests of Kentucky and Tennessee. Again, not many wolf Kin left, but once in a great while a Talon runs with a Kin pack. The Talon has to be careful, though — one overcurious wolf cub can bring disaster not only on the Kin pack, but also on the Talon's sept.

Heading north, we eventually hit upstate New York. The North Country Protectorate isn't just Red Talons, but they've been pretty clear about who gets to breed with the native wolves there. Supposedly, members of other tribes (Get and Shadow Lords, mostly) will try to snatch a female wolf to use for their own breeding purposes, but I don't know that it's true. What I do know is that the Talons control a very small caern in upstate New York, a few days' run from Utica. I never visited it (evidently it's nigh impossible to find) but I have the information from a very reliable source that only one pack looks after it.

Going even farther north, we make it Canada. Canada's a nice place to be if you're a wolf. Since large parts of the country are still forested, and the canucks haven't been quite as ambitious about cutting down all the trees as the Americans, the Talons still breed and live here, probably better than anywhere else in the world. I know of one Talon-run caern in Canada, a few miles east of Great Bear Lake, and the tribe has

members at several other multi-tribal caerns. In general, Talons outside of a Talon-controlled sept tend to be Whelps — they don't see humans as quite as destructive and wasteful as others. However, that means that when they *do* see a human despoiling the land, they assume he's a bad influence on the other humans. In short, he's meat.

If Canada's good, Alaska's fair. People still shoot wolves, yeah, but the population is thin and much of the state is human-less. Especially if the Talons get their way.

One of the septs in Alaska is called the Sept of the Weeping Daughter. It's controlled by Red Talons, but it's a strange place in that the heart of the caern consists of some human (or, more likely, homid Garou) burial grounds. The caern's totem takes a humanoid form, and yet the Talons protect it. The lore of the area has it that the forest in which the caern sits is haunted by the ghosts of dead Eskimos (which is true) and that people who venture there are torn to shreds by evil forces (which is also true, minus the evil). On the whole, the humans in the area haven't bothered the caern much.

That's going to change, though. The caern sits about 15 miles or so from the small town of Lawson, and that town is suffering, economically. They've begun to negotiate with lumber companies... and you can probably see where this is going. I told the sept leader at the Weeping Daughter about it, but I left shortly thereafter (I really wasn't welcome), so I've got no idea if the town is still standing.

South America

You'll find wolves as far south as Mexico, but the real fun is in the Amazon. The Red Talons don't always buy into Golgol Fangs-First's war jargon, but enough Talons hear "war on humans" and sign up to give the tribe a presence in the jungle. The problem, as they discover when they get there, is that the rainforest is not the same kind of forest they grew up in. The prey is different, the climate is different, and there aren't any other wolves around (few if any wolf Kin live down there, and any that are there are imports). Red Talons in the war either have something to avenge, have lost everything, or are in disgrace to be so far from home. They also tend to be on edge all the time just from being so far out of their element. Some of them — like the chief Talon, Fierce Hunger — learn to deal with it and set good examples, but more often they either die in battle or try to get home after a few months.

In the small nation of Chile, however, the Talons are making some headway with a different kind of battle. A few years ago, a pack of Talons ventured to Chile to try and breed with the remaining Andean wolves (so named for their home, the Chilean Andes). It's worked, and while the species is by no means thriving, they have some powerful protection now. To my knowledge, they don't control a caern in the mountains, but I heard his information secondhand, so there might well be "Chilean Sept" out there somewhere.

Europe

The entire continent is so choked by the Weaver, it's amazing that the Garou have any presence here at all. I'm impressed that the Talons in particular continue to maintain any numbers on the continent. Still, it's not much. They have protectorates here, but they're pitifully small — much too small for their Kin to be eating well, unless the Talons are providing the food.

You might find the odd Talon at a multi-tribal sept anywhere in Europe, but the biggest concentrations are in Northern Spain, the rural parts of Hungary and Poland, and Scandinavia. And even in these places, those concentrations aren't really "big." The Talons in Europe are about one hair away from raging across the continent because they've been backed into corners for far too long.

For example, a sign of hope recently was a new pack of Kin wolves in Scandinavia. They're dead — the humans found out and slaughtered them. One wolf survived, and that was by entering his First Change. Europe has so few wild places left, and what it has are really too small for wolves. Since the destruction of the Blue River Caern (on the river Tisza — the entire river was poisoned with massive amounts of cyanide) I think the Talons control *one* caern on the entire continent (not counting Russia, which I'll cover separately).

The good news, if you want to call it that, is that the Talons, the Black Furies, and the Shadow Lords have successfully allied in Europe and made some great advances against the Wyrm and its minions. There's some friction between the Talons and the Furies — I mentioned Hears-the-Smallest-Sounds' thoughts on rescuing human women from the "rape camps" in Eastern Europe earlier — but since the Blue River died, the Talons have been more receptive to give and take. After all, they got their fondest wish out of it. The Impergium has begun anew.

It sounds crazy, I know, but it's true. In the few places with any numbers of Red Talons, they've started culling. I don't know what system they use to figure out who or how many humans to kill, but I do know that they aren't the only tribe involved. The trouble, of course, is that this isn't going to go unnoticed. Humans don't *always* flip out when they see us. Sometimes they get mad, and sooner or later the odds are going to catch up with these Garou.

One of the places the Red Talons are hoping to preserve is in Northern Spain. On the lower slopes of the Pyrenees is a caern called Mother's Shelter. Sounds like it should be a Children of Gaia caern, right? Well, at one point, it was.

The story goes that some 400 years ago, the Children held that caern and ran a small church nearby. A good chunk of the people who lived there and attended the church were Kinfolk, and they had a decent grip on things — weren't screwing up the land, practiced Christianity but didn't oppress each other. The Children of Gaia were evidently very pleased with themselves for this mini-utopia. It didn't last, of course. One night a Red Talon Theurge called Howl-Chills-the-Blood showed up and warned the Children that their flock was about to rise up against them and that they would lose the caern. The Children, naturally, didn't listen.

The next week, the people in the town found a new leader. He was a dark, scary guy who only came out at night, and he'd apparently been there for some time — the Gaians had just gotten too complacent to notice him. The Children tried to figure out why the people weren't listening to them anymore, but eventually those same people rose up against them, burned the church (which they believed had been defiled) to ash, drove off the Children (with the bloodsucker's help) and built a new town farther down the mountain. Howl-Chills-the-Blood led her tribe to the caern and they've run it ever since, but they kept the old name. It's just kind of funny that a caern called "Mother's Shelter" is now the staging ground for concerted assaults on local towns.

Wonder if that vampire is still around, though?

Russia

Last bastion of Silver Fang dominance. Sorry, how'd that slip out?

The Red Talons were hit just as hard by the problems in Russia as any other tribe. Probably worse, because of the country's "War on Wolves." The Talons lost a lot of Kin when the Ruskies were flying around shooting them from helicopters, and the fact that the great Hag Baba Yaga was orchestrating the entire country's corruption didn't help.

Now, I'm not really up on who or what Baba Yaga was. I've been to Russia, but very recently. I heard stories about the Battle of Kursk and how more than 200 Garou fought the great Zmei that night, but I don't know the truth of it. What I do know is that even if Russia's not a roach motel for Garou anymore, it's still a dangerous place. Black Spiral Dancers and

Banes are considered mundane problems — it's the fact that the land is despoiled in more places than not and that caerns have a habit of falling year by year that causes the Garou real worry.

Witness: The Winter Forest Sept. The place is (or was) a Red Talon caern, but occasionally they would let other lupus in. Banking on my remarkable skills of subterfuge, I tried to visit while I was in Russia. It's supposed to be a caern of fertility, and I've never seen one (who has?). But when I ventured to where the caern was supposed to be, I couldn't find it. I found no Garou, no wolves, no evidence of any caern.

The caern could have fallen, I suppose, but I'd have expected to see some evidence of that. I didn't feel any desecration, but it didn't have the same power in the air that caerns usually do. I don't think it's gone for good, for two reasons. I did some asking at other caerns in Russia, and found that the Get (who are lousy liars) know something about it. They aren't letting on, but I'd never accuse the Get of treachery, so I imagine if they've assisted the Talons, they're doing a good job of it.

Also, I heard a rumor while in Russia that Tundra Runner, a rather infamous Talon and hard-line Predator King, returned from the Umbra with "a great secret to share with his tribe." Tundra Runner, I've heard, had a habit of pissing off potential allies, but he seems to have made some friends now, because I couldn't get straight answers out of *anyone*. One Ragabash actually suggested that the entire caern was transported into an Umbral realm! Is that even possible?

India

Bet you didn't even know that wolves were native to India, huh? Wolves thrive here (comparatively) and, just like everywhere else, they go after penned livestock (think about it — the prey can't run very far, can they?). The problem is that the locals have gotten smart about keeping livestock penned in and safe recently, so the wolves are going after another easy source of meat: untended infant children.

My first reaction to that was probably just as instinctive as my readers', but frankly, I can see where the wolves are coming from.

Try to distance yourself from the horror of losing a child in such a manner for moment. If a wolf is hungry, it will eat carrion. It has no compunctions about pulling down a helpless fawn or calf, and an infant human left out at the wrong time is just a tempting meal to a starving wolf. This doesn't do anything for the wolf's international public relations, however.

But there's another spin on this: when wolves carry off an infant, the government pays the family a lot of money. More than a year's salary, in some cases. So some folks have speculated that occasionally infants will get deliberately left out where the wolves can find them. The parents get their money, they get to blame the wolves for their loss, and life goes on. If the notion of wolves eating babies made you queasy, the notion of parents leaving their children to be eaten for money should make you feel even worse.

But Indian folklore is replete with wolves, even nowadays. People there believe in werewolves, and fear them even if they don't understand them. The two tribes that have the biggest presence in India are the Children of Gaia and (of course) the Red Talons, which may be one reason why people are so afraid of wolves there. The Talons and the Children do *not* get along in India, as the Talons take full advantage of the lack of technology and the crowded conditions to try and wipe the humans out. I can only imagine that both tribes would be disgusted by the way innocent children are fed to wolves — it would offend the Children's delicate sensibilities, but the Talons would be horrified to find a parent willingly giving up its children to a predator. Wolves fight for their cubs.

As far as specifics go, I mentioned earlier that I spoke with a No-Moon near a small village. He represented a sept, but refused to tell me where. I tagged him, spiritually speaking, and followed him home. I didn't get too close to the bawn of the caern before I had to bail (some kind of spiritual alarm went off, and the Stormcrow I had called up to act as a spy hasn't let me forget it since) but that caern is *hot*. It's a caern of Rage, I'd guess, and given the amount of secrecy surrounding it, the Talons of India have something important on the horizon.

Australia

No wolves here. Only dingoes. But the Talons make do.

You've no doubt heard the ugly history of the War of Tears. The Black Spiral Dancers tricked a Red Talon into starting the war, the Shadow Lords jumped on board because we're sneaky and evil (whatever), and Bob's-your-uncle, the Bunyip are all dead. Every Garou in Australia now feels the collective guilt over the war (except the Children of Gaia, who just act smug about the fact that they didn't participate), but the local Red Talons still maintain what they did was just.

Well, the Australian Talons may not know it, but the Talons in the rest of the world think that the "dingoes" are about as much part of the tribe as a mixed-breed husky. The basic attitude is "Sure, you go play at being a Talon, but you haven't done a thing except exterminate a tribe." Needless to say, bringing that up to Australian Talons is unwise (but I did it anyway). They tend to Rage very quickly at any insinuation that breeding with dingoes has made them less wolf. Truth hurts, I guess.

Australia's Garou look to a ruling body called the Jindabyne Council for leadership. One member of each tribe sits on it. The council's had its share of troubles. The former Shadow Lord member went nuts and tried to take over the country or something, the Fianna have been feuding for years, but the Talons were all pretty united behind their leader, an Ahroun called Mamu. And then something weird happened.

All of my Galliard instincts scream out to be more specific than that, but I really don't know and even Rage-in-the-Streets, the new Red Talon leader and a damned nice fella, won't tell me. He just makes vague references to "reconciliation" and "a miracle" and lets it go at that. Sources in my own tribe in Australia feel it has something to do with the Glass Walkers or the Mokolé, or both, but I can't seem to get the real story. Anyway, Mamu stormed off into the outback and pretty much kills whatever crosses his path. The Talons are by no means united behind Rage-in-the-Streets (who, as I mentioned earlier, is a Whelp and proud of it). And, talk outside of the country has it that some Talons from other lands are considering sending some "real Talons" down there to hunt Mamu down, oust Rage-in-the-Streets, and get the tribe back to where it should be. If I hear about any such plans, I'll warn Rage, but so far nothing's come of it.

Africa

Again, no native wolves, but that doesn't stop the Talons. They control a caern near Luxor in Egypt called Howling Sands, but I couldn't get in (no non-Talons allowed). Apparently that caern's fallen on hard times, but I didn't find out much. There's a member of the sept who might have talked to me, but then the Guardians showed up and I really didn't feel like tussling with them.

Farther south in Africa, though, are the Kucha Ekundu — Red Talons that breed with Cape hunting dogs. I have to admit, they look really funny. They're

not as big as wolves, and have this odd striped pattern on their fur. But they're true Garou, don't ever doubt that. They're not as strong as you or me, but they're quick and they use pack tactics better than some experienced war packs I've seen. Allegedly the Talons started breeding with them as the result of a test from the Mokolé, and passed it. I know that the Fera of Africa are united now (at least in theory) under an agreement called the Ahadi. I also know that the Silent Striders and the Red Talons are boon companions in Africa, and that the Caern of the Bloodied Rock, although Kucha Ekundu-controlled, is a frequent resting-place for the Striders. I didn't get a chance to visit that sept while in Africa, but I did meet up with Walks-With-Might (who, while he's not a Talon, evidently carries enough clout with the Bloodied Rock to speak for them) who invited me to visit. I'm definitely planning a return trip. The Kucha Ekundu are much more sociable than most Talons, although they have roughly the same attitude about humans.

The Umbra

The Talons, as I mentioned, defer to their Theurges in the Umbra. The spirit worlds can try your patience pretty severely, and the Talons don't have a lot of room for riddles. Getting a Talon to go to a city is hard enough, but getting her to step sideways while there is much worse. Talons hate Pattern Spiders and hate the stink of Umbral cityscapes.

In the forests, though, they're just as comfortable in the Umbra as any of us, if not more so. Scents are more vivid, which makes the Talons even greater hunters. They can react instinctively and not worry about some human-thing gumming up the works; no fences, no gates. Some Talons venture off into the Umbra searching for a place where no human influence is felt at all. Reportedly, they find either Pangaea (which actually does have some humans, or at least human-like spirits, but they don't really influence the place much) or the Talon homeland. I've never been to the Talon homeland, of course, so I can only imagine the forests and tundra of the place. I'd love to go, but I think I'm excluded. Ah, well.

Another realm that the Talons frequent is Wolfhome. They'll sometimes take their cubs there to teach them why the humans need to go. I've been to Wolfhome, and I'll say that after some time there, locked in Lupus form and hunted at every turn, you gain a new appreciation for the Talons and what they go through their entire lives.

Conclusions

For what it's worth. This is what I've learned about the Red Talons, the wolf tribe. They're different from us — from wolves, from werewolves, from all the other tribes. They advocate wholesale slaughter of a race that most of us consider Kin. They're angry and resentful, and we can understand that intellectually, but we'll never know what it feels like to know, in the pits of our stomachs, that this generation might be the last one. We might know it as Garou, but our human families and Kinfolk are still around, and we can take joy in that. The Red Talons Rage against *total* extinction, and there's no way for our human minds to grasp that. So instead, like humans do, we downplay their pain, and we talk down to the Talons. We forget what they know. We forget the past.

But the Red Talons have been right about everything so far. They were right about the Impergium; ending it was a mistake. They were right about the War of Rage. They were right in every single one of their prophecies.

They still howl out their portents, you know. Listen at a moot if a Red Talon is howling a story. A lot of times, their howls seem disjointed to us — no time frame given in the "story" so we don't know when it's supposed to have happened. It's told without names or much detail — at least as we know it — so we assume the Talon doesn't know what he's talking about.

That's not smart of us, though. The Talons know the truth. All we have to do is listen, and I suggest we start.

Chapter Three: Bones

"There were deer running in the woods beyond the meadow: I could smell them on the winter's night's air. And I was, above all things, hungry."

— Neil Gaiman, "Only the End of the World Again"

The Red Talons' most defining characteristic, and the one of which they are most proud, is the complete absence of human blood in their tribe. Their ritual practices and the Gifts they learn reflect this. This chapter presents new Gifts, rites, and other traits. Note that some of these traits (Merits and Flaws in particular) might be appropriate for other lupus Garou at the Storyteller's discretion. Most of the material found in this chapter, however, is particular to the wolf tribe (and rightly so; it's their book, after all).

Backgrounds

As in the other Revised Tribebooks, this section presents some ideas and options for customizing Backgrounds for a Red Talon character. This shouldn't be seen as a restriction or as gospel truth, but a player who wishes to play a Red Talon and is having trouble seeing how they might interact with the outside world might consider these points.

Allies

Red Talons may not have allies in human society, for obvious reasons. The Storyteller may wish to allow a Talon character to purchase this Background to represent a werewolf ally, although the cost should likely be increased by 1.

Ancestors

The Red Talon view of time gives them a special relationship with their Ancestors. Whether a distant relative lived a year or a millennium in the past, the lessons she can teach the Talon likely relate to the war against the Wyrm (and humanity). Since the Talons' methods haven't changed much in the ensuing years, Talons often don't suffer from a "generation gap" between the young cubs and the ancient Ancestors.

Contacts

As with Allies, Red Talons cannot purchase this Background in the usual sense (of human contacts). The Storyteller may decide to allow a Talon to take non-human contacts (such as other Garou or even Corax) at an increased cost.

Fetish

Red Talons don't make use of fetishes as often as the other tribes, but they do use them. Most Talon fetishes are simple affairs — a strip of bark or a chunk of rock that just "seemed right" to the Talon who created the fetish. Sometimes, a Talon will take a piece of equipment from

a fallen foe (or a piece of the foe itself) and fashion a fetish from it. While this sometimes means crafting a fetish from smashed human paraphernalia, the Talons recognize that when humans see their precious technology worn as trophies by werewolves, it increases the grip of fear on their puny souls.

When crafting fetishes, Talons prefer not to use predator-spirits (whom they feel are too few to bind). They recognize that even prey animals often display impressive prowess; binding a moose-spirit might create a fetish that makes the wielder stronger, for example. Fetish weapons are not unknown among the Talons, but are extremely rare, as most Talons feel that Gaia has provided them with all of the weaponry they need. A Talon that wields a weapon has likely spent time in a multi-tribal sept and is in for some ribbing should she ever visit an all-Talon sept.

Kinfolk

To say that the Red Talons are protective of their Kinfolk is a gross understatement. The other tribes breed with humans, and as far as the Talons see it, there is no shortage of humans with which to breed. The Talons' Kinfolk are *dying out*, which means that the days of the tribe itself are likewise numbered. Any being so foolish as to injure a wolf, Kinfolk or no, within miles of a Red Talon has just forfeited its life, and the Talons will not hear otherwise.

The Kinfolk Background to the Talons is a great responsibility. Their wolf Kin can provide a welcome respite from the war, allowing a Talon to run with a wolf pack and forget her life as a Garou for a short time (much like human Kin can for homid Garou). But the Talon must also protect her Kinfolk from the world at large, not just the forces of the Wyrm. This often leads Talons to tell no one of their Kinfolk, even their packmates (which, in turn, can make the Talon difficult to find in an emergency).

Pure Breed

A Pure Bred Red Talon is an alpha wolf, no questions about it. Talons with high levels of Pure Breed tend to a deep red color all over in Lupus form, and are strikingly beautiful. Such Garou, however, often look even more bestial than usual in Homid form (which doesn't mean a thing to other Talons). Since Talons haven't inbred the way the Silver Fangs have over the years, their Pure Bred members tend to be strong, fast, and very capable (higher than usual levels of Primal-Urge and Physical Attributes are often appropriate in such Garou). Most other Red Talons will instinctively defer to a Pure Bred Garou, especially one of their own tribe. This sometimes supercedes rank, if only until both Garou realize who should actually be considered dominant.

Resources

Red Talons may not, for obvious reasons, purchase Resources during character creation, although they may wind up garnering some wealth through various means over the course of the chronicle as usual.

Rites

The Red Talons make use of several rites that the other tribes haven't discovered, and have their own take on many existing ones. More information on Talons and their rites can be found on page 72.

Totem

All-Talon packs, such as the Winter Packs, often follow Griffin or an affiliated spirit (such as Lion or Wolverine). Multi-tribal packs including one or more Red Talons might follow nearly any totem, but no self-respecting Talon will follow Cockroach or a City Father/Mother or any such Weaver-affiliated nonsense. Some highly aggressive Talons balk at following "prey totems" such a Bull, Goat, or Stag, but this is by no means a universal attitude in the tribe.

Gifts

Griffin's brood teaches the Red Talons Gifts that no human-tainted tribe could ever hope to learn. Also, as with rites, the Red Talons have discovered Gifts over the years that they simply feel no need to share with the other tribes. These blessings from Gaia help keep the Red Talons in their proper role as supreme predators, and the Talons who know of these Gifts feel that homid Garou probably aren't capable of understanding or using them effectively.

General Gifts

The Gifts listed below can be learned by any Red Talon of sufficient rank, provided that the Garou knows of the Gift and what kind of spirit might teach it.

• **Eye of the Hunter (Level One)** — Wolves can sense which animal from a herd is sick or weak and therefore the easiest prey. Red Talons can do so normally when confronted with a herd of deer, but more complex creatures like predators or pseudo-predators (like humans) make this difficult. This Gift, taught by a wolf-spirit, allows the Talon to pick out the weakest member of a group at a glance. It does not reveal *why* the target is the weak link in a herd, only that she is, but that alone is often enough to give the Garou an edge.

System: The player rolls Perception + Primal-Urge (difficulty 7). If the roll succeeds, the character knows which member of a given group is the weakest (determined by the Storyteller) and which is the leader. If the Red Talon enters combat against this group, she gains an extra die to her attack pools against the weakest member.

MET: Make a Mental Challenge (retest with *Primal-Urge*). With success, you can determine who is the weakest member of a group and who is the leader. Group dynamics (such as why this particular member is considered the weakest) are beyond the scope of this Gift. Should you enter combat against the weakest member, you gain a bonus Trait on attack challenges only.

• **Hidden Killer (Level One)** — The Red Talons did not survive for so many years without learning ways to conceal themselves. This Gift allows a Garou to leave behind no physical evidence that would betray her hand (or claws and teeth) in a slaying. This Gift is taught by a snake-spirit.

System: After a battle, the Garou must lick each wound she inflicted once. The player spends one Gnosis point and rolls Intelligence + Stealth (difficulty 7). If the roll succeeds, the wounds alter themselves so that they resemble stabbing wounds rather than bite marks, and any hair, saliva, blood or other physical evidence from the werewolf's body disappears. Any peripheral damage (smashed furniture, for example) remains as it was, however.

MET: After battle, lick each wound you inflicted, then spend a Gnosis Trait and make a Mental Challenge (retest with *Stealth*).

• **Purify Meat (Level One)** — While some Red Talons abstain from eating humans because of the Litany, the more common reason for hunting more conventional game is that humans are befouled by the chemicals they put into their bodies. In some parts of the world, this isn't such a problem, but in most countries, human flesh is foul-tasting and unhealthy, even for Garou. In other places, the land is so corrupted that other game animals begin to taste rubbery and disgusting. With this Gift, a Red Talon can purge chemicals and other poisons from dead flesh. A water elemental teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point. The Garou must touch the meat he wishes to cleanse. Each use of this Gift cleans approximately fifty pounds of dead meat of any non-supernatural toxins.

MET: Spend a Gnosis point and touch the meat you want to cleanse. This Gift can cleanse about 50 pounds of dead meat of non-supernatural toxins (chemicals, toxic waste, drugs, alcohol). This Gift only works on dead meat — it is not an arm's-length *Resist Toxin*.

• **Predator's Leap (Level Two)** — While any lupus werewolf can learn the secrets of jumping great distances, the Red Talons have refined the Gift to great effect when chasing or ambushing a foe. By employing this Gift, the Talon's leap "tracks" a moving target, allowing her to pounce on her prey even if said prey has dodged or fled while the Talon is in mid-leap. A fox- or (sometimes) a cat-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player must roll to leap as usual, as detailed on page 197 of **Werewolf**. She then spends a point of Rage and rolls Wits + Primal-Urge (difficulty 7); the leap is counted as a Rage action, and does not affect the attack dice pool. Any successes on the roll are subtracted from an opponent's successes to dodge or flee from the Talon, before the Talon's attack roll is made. The Talon may then attack normally.

MET: Make your Physical Challenge to leap. Should you win or tie, spend a Rage Trait and make a Mental Challenge (retest with *Primal-Urge*). With success, you gain two bonus Physical Traits in your next Physical Challenge (whether attacking or pursuit) against your foe. After the next challenge is made, the bonus Traits are lost.

• **Mother's Rage (Level Three)** — A she-wolf is most dangerous when protecting her cubs, and will fight against enemies from which she would normally flee if her family is at stake. The Red Talon with this Gift is able to harness that Rage and use it in battle, although only when defending something of value. A bear- or wolf-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: This Gift can only be used in defense of something or someone else — Kinfolk, a wounded packmate, a caern, etc. If the Red Talon is attacking a foe, she may not activate Mother's Rage. To use this Gift, the player spends two Rage points. The Garou enters a kind of frenzy, but stays within the vicinity of her charge. She will attack anything that gets too close, within the usual guidelines of frenzy (i.e., if her Rage is equal to or lower than her Gnosis, she will not attack packmates). While in this state, the Talon takes no wound penalties. All difficulties to soak are reduced by two and she gains an extra dot of Strength. Additionally, she regains one Rage point each turn while the Gift is in effect, making it impossible for her to run out of Rage (and therefore impossible to lose the wolf). All of these benefits disappear when the Red Talon's charge is out of danger or at the end of the scene, whichever comes first.

MET: This Gift may only be used in defense of someone or something of great value — a wounded packmate, Kinfolk, cubs, a caern, or the like. Spend two Rage Traits to activate this Gift. You then enter a kind of controlled frenzy. You are bounded by the usual guidelines of frenzy, but you will only attack anything that gets too close to your charge. You take no wound penalties, gain two extra Healthy health levels and the Physical Traits *Ferocious* x 2. While this Gift is in effect, you also regain a Rage Trait at the end of each

turn. The Gift's effects end when your charge is out of danger or the scene ends, whichever comes first.

• **Territory (Level Four)** — The Red Talon with this Gift doesn't need to patrol his hunting ground to know what transpires there. With but a moment of concentration, he may extend his senses to any area he has marked. This Gift is taught by a wolf-spirit.

System: To use this Gift, the Red Talon must first mark one or more areas with his own urine. A Talon may have a number of marked locations equal to his Gnosis (and does not have to establish such a mark in every place that he urinates). Thereafter, the player may roll Perception + Primal-Urge (difficulty 7) to extend the Talon's senses to that location. The character can sense the area as though standing in the same place he was in when he marked the area originally. The scent marks last for one week per dot of Gnosis the character possesses (for wilderness) or one day per dot of Gnosis (for urban environments).

MET: First, mark your chosen areas (*for the sake of the game environment and public health, don't actually use your own urine!*); you may have as many marked locations as you have Gnosis, and not every place that your character urinated is part of this Gift. With the areas marked, you can make a Mental Challenge (retest with *Primal-Urge*) and extend your senses to a spot in question, allowing you to sense it as though you were physically present. The markings last for one week per Gnosis (in the wilderness) or one day per Gnosis (in the city).

• **Blessing of the First Pack (Level Five)** — The Red Talons believe that the very first pack of Garou set the standards for the auspices, and that only the Talons retain a strong enough connection to that First Pack to use this Gift. This may or may not be true, but no non-Talon Garou has ever exhibited this mighty Gift (but then, very few among the Talons even know of it). To learn this Gift, the Talon must have at least one dot in Ancestors. The Garou calls upon her the originator of her auspice and is temporarily transformed into the pinnacle of her moon-sign. An avatar of Wolf or a powerful Lune may teach this Gift, but neither does so often.

System: The player spends two Gnosis points and rolls Charisma + Ancestors (difficulty 8). If the roll succeeds, the character becomes infused with the very essence of her auspice. For the remainder of the scene, the character receives five dots of Pure Breed in addition to any she already possesses. She may also make

use of *any* auspice Gift for her particular auspice of level 4 or lower. (Gifts taken from sources other than **Werewolf** are subject to Storyteller approval.) In addition, Blessing of the First Pack grants power based on the character's auspice:

Auspice	Bonus
Ragabash	+3 to Stealth, +2 to Wits and Dexterity
Theurge	+3 to Enigmas, +2 to Intelligence and Gnosis
Philodox	+3 to Rituals, +2 to Manipulation and Stamina
Galliard	+3 to Expression, +2 to Charisma and Strength
Ahroun	+3 to Leadership, +2 to Strength and Rage

MET: Spend two Gnosis Traits and make a Static Social Challenge (difficulty eight Traits, retest if you have *Ancestors*). With success, for the rest of the scene, you may be considered to have Pure Breed x 5 (in addition to any levels you already own. You may also make use of any auspice Gift for your auspice at Intermediate or Basic level (it's up to the Storyteller whether you can use that nifty Children of Gaia or Fianna Auspice Gift, though). Blessing of the First Pack also grants further endowment of your auspice:

Ragabash	*Stealth* x 3, *Clever* x 2, *Quick* x 2
Theurge	*Enigmas* x 3, *Knowledgeable* x 2, two Gnosis Traits
Philodox	*Rituals* x 3, *Persuasive* x 2, *Tireless* x 2
Galliard	*Expression* x 3, *Expressive* x 2, *Stalwart* x 2
Ahroun	*Leadership* x 3, *Ferocious* x 2, two Rage Traits

• **Home in All Lands (Level Six)** — Legends among the Red Talons state that the wolves with the greatest connection to the Progenitor Wolf were not bound by distance, but indeed could appear anywhere where wolves were found. This was long thought to be simply lore, but in fact an elder Red Talon with a strong enough lineage might well learn to fade from one location and appear anywhere else in the Realm or the Umbra, provided that the Progenitor has been there before him. Only the Progenitor Wolf himself teaches this Gift.

System: The player must roll Gnosis as though her character were stepping sideways. If successful, the character may appear at any location on Earth where wolves might be found naturally (whether or not any still exist) or any location that boasts Garou. She may instead choose to appear in any Umbral Realm that she has previously visited. A Red Talon must have Pure Breed 5 to learn this Gift.

MET: You must first have *Pure Breed* x 5 to learn this Gift, and only the Progenitor Wolf teaches it. Make a challenge to step sideways. With success, you may appear anywhere on Earth where wolves might be found (whether they're still there or not), or any place that has a Garou population. You may also appear in any Umbral Realm you have previously visited.

Howl Gifts

The Fianna may claim that their ancestors were the first to howl to Luna or some such nonsense, but the Red Talons know that for as long as wolves have existed, they have howled. Over time, the Talons have spoken with wolf-spirits and learned secret howls that carry devastating and powerful effects.

The following Gifts are each taught by wolf-spirits or ancestor-spirits and require that the Garou let out a mighty howl. If the Red Talon also knows the Galliard Gift: Call of the Wyld, reduce the difficulty of the roll by one.

MET: These Gifts may be difficult to utilize if you're playing in an area where howling, barking and similar noises would cause alarm (remember — "Be Mindful of Others!"). The Storyteller may deem it safest for the Gift-user to simple call out the name of the howl she is invoking. If your surroundings make it possible to howl, then by all means do — it can add a great deal to the atmosphere of the game. If you know the Gift: Call of the Wyld, you receive a single retest on the performance of the howl (the second results stand; anything after that is up to you).

• **Howl to the Pack (Level One)** — The Talon howls, and no matter how far away, her pack hears her. She cannot hear any response they might give, but she can be sure that they hear any message she wishes to impart.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Primal-Urge (difficulty 7). The "pack" in question might be the Garou's literal pack, bonded by a totem, or any wolf to whom the Red Talon is related. Each use of the Gift allows one howl, and the player must roll Manipulation + Expression (difficulty 6) to convey any concept more complicated than "warning" or "I need help." The recipients of the howl are the only ones who can hear it.

MET: Make a Social Challenge (retest with *Primal-Urge*). Your pack can be your literal pack, one that is bonded by a totem or a wolf that is related to you. A second Social Challenge (retest with *Expression*) is needed to convey more complex concepts. Only the recipients the howl is intended for can hear it.

• **Primal Howl (Level Two)** — The howls of a wolf pack evoke fear in prey, as they sense the predators approaching. This Gift allows a Red Talon to emit a howl that evokes that same reaction in anyone that can hear it.

System: The player rolls Stamina + Expression (difficulty 7). If the roll succeeds, any being that wishes to approach the Garou must succeed in a Willpower roll (difficulty 6). If the Garou approaches, the being must make the same roll or back away (or flee). Wolves and Garou are not affected by this Gift. Every success on the player's roll beyond the first lends an additional "voice" to

the howl. Therefore, if the player rolls three successes to activate this Gift, it sounds as though three Garou are howling, not one. Each additional "wolf" adds one to the difficulty of Willpower rolls to approach the Garou or stand one's ground if the Red Talon approaches (so to approach the Garou on a "three-wolf" howl would require a Willpower roll at difficulty 8).

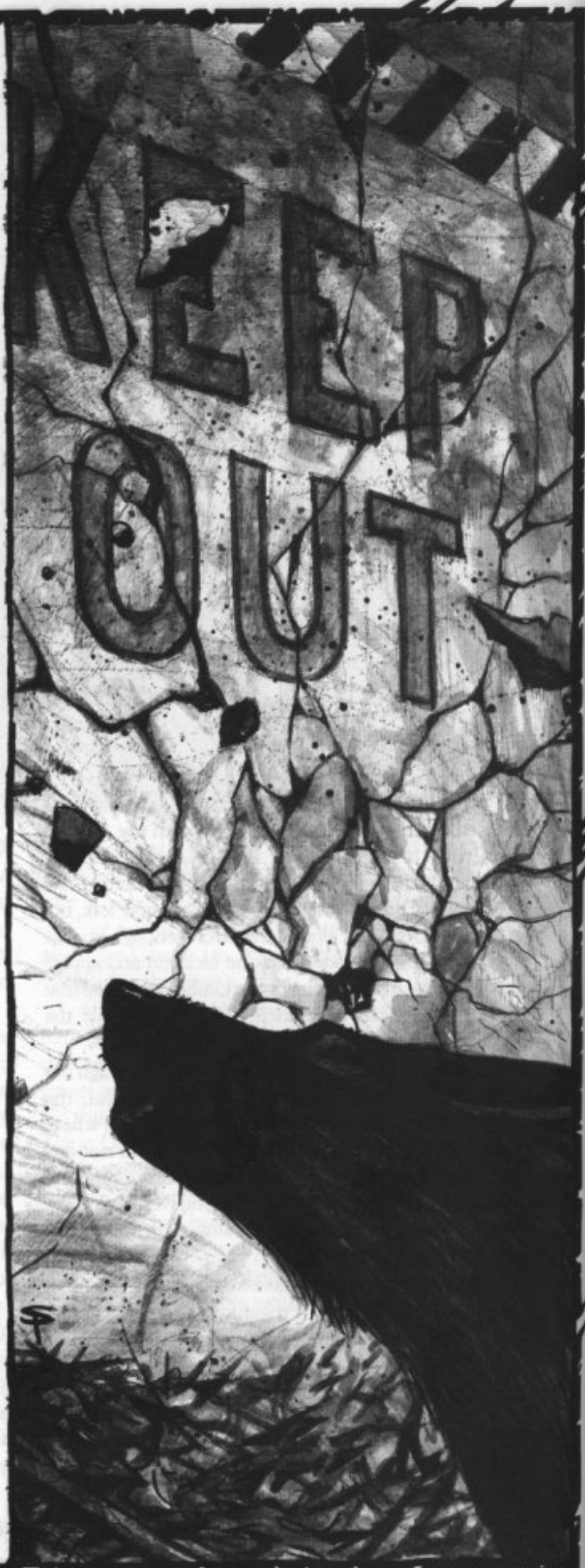
MET: Make a Physical Challenge (retest with *Expression*). With success, anyone that wishes to approach you must succeed in a Willpower Challenge. If you approach them, they must make the same challenge to remain, or they must back away or flee. Other Garou and wolves do not suffer this effect. By spending additional Physical Traits, you can add another voice to the howl; spending three would give you three additional "singers." Those who wish to approach you must bid the same amount you spent in Willpower to stand their ground or approach you.

• **Howl of Hunger (Level Three)** — Wolves gorge themselves when they eat, especially during the cold winter months, because they cannot be sure when they will find food. Most humans know nothing of this kind of hunger, as they have their food handed to them. The Garou with this Gift can weaken any that hear her howl with crippling hunger.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Intimidation (difficulty 7). If the roll succeeds, anyone within earshot of the werewolf's howl loses two dice from any mental and physical dice pools as their bodies are wracked with hunger pangs (the player may choose to spend a Gnosis point to leave the Red Talon's packmates unaffected). This Gift only functions on creatures that feel physical hunger for food — vampires and other dead things are unaffected. However, any Garou affected by this Gift must immediately check for frenzy (although even a Garou in frenzy is subject to the dice penalty due to weakness). Frenzied werewolves are likely to feast on any meat they can find if subject to the Howl of Hunger, much like homid Garou in the Thrall of the Wyrm. The effects of the Gift last for one scene.

MET: Make a Social Challenge (retest with Intimidation). With success, anyone in earshot suffers a two-Trait penalty on Mental and Physical Challenges as they suffer hunger pangs (spend a Gnosis Trait to shield your packmates from the effects). Only those who know physical hunger for food are affected — vampires, the walking dead, Risen and similar creatures do not suffer. Any Garou struck by *Howl of Hunger* must immediately test for frenzy, but he will continue to suffer the penalty even if he frenzies, and will eat *any* meat within his reach. The effects last for one scene.

• **Howl of Death (Level Four)** — A Talon blessed with this Gift may infuse her howl with Rage



and pain, causing grievous wounds to one target. The werewolf must be able to see her target clearly, and the target must be able to hear the howl. Only the intended target is affected by the Gift, though anyone else who hears it is disquieted and frightened.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Primal-Urge (difficulty 6). Each success inflicts one level of lethal damage, which the target may soak if he is able. The damage manifests, should anyone care to look, as massive internal damage, as if the target's innards suddenly rupture.

MET: The target of this Gift must be within uninterrupted line of sight and within earshot of the howl. Make a Social Challenge (retest with *Primal-Urge*). Success inflicts two levels of lethal damage, which manifests as massive internal damage as organs rupture. The howl is frightening even to those that are not its targets.

• **Shattering Howl (Level Five)** — By using this Gift, the Garou releases a howl with enough power to shattering any man-made object. The Shattering Howl can splinter plastic, crack stone, and puncture rubber and similar materials. The werewolf does not have any control over what she shatters with this Gift, however, so she is advised to use it with care.

System: The player spends one Willpower point and rolls Rage (difficulty 7). Exactly what kind of material the howl shatters depends on the number of successes rolled. One success shatters normal glass. Three cracks concrete. Five successes rend solid steel. The character may use this Gift on successive turns, but each use requires another Willpower point and a new roll.

MET: Spend a Willpower Trait and a number of Rage Traits based on the effect you wish to cause. One Trait shatters glass; three Traits breaks concrete; five Traits will weaken steel. This Gift can be used successively, but each use requires another Willpower Trait spent and more Rage spent.

Camp Gifts

For the Gifts listed below, the term "Camp" Gifts is somewhat misleading. Red Talon "camps," with one exception, aren't so much organized societies within the tribe as a collection of like-minded individuals. That in mind, any Red Talon can technically learn any of these Gifts, but they are much more commonly taught within the given "camps."

Warders of the Land

The Warders have no love for humans, but they do recognize either the improbability or the spiritual and ethical concerns with wiping the human race out. They often favor Gifts that allow them to work around humans rather than directly against them.

• **Mark of the Prey (Level Two)** — Rather than take her vengeance directly on an offending human, the werewolf can choose to change the human's spiritual resonance to resemble that of a prey animal. Any predator that sees the human, no matter how small or normally afraid of humans, will see that human as prey. In most cases, this proves simply inconvenient, but if the human happens to own several large dogs, the result could be deadly. Any spirit of a prey animal teaches this Gift, sometimes under duress.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point and rolls Charisma + Animal Ken (difficulty of the local Gauntlet). If the roll succeeds, any carnivorous animal that sees the targeted human attacks him immediately, even if the animal is much too small to seriously injure, let alone eat, the hapless victim. This Gift only functions on one human target, and cannot be used on "supernatural" humans such as ghouls and mages (their spirits are complex enough that the Gift doesn't "take"). The effects last for one day.

MET: Spend a Gnosis Trait and make a Static Social Challenge against the Gauntlet rating (retest with *Animal Ken*). With success, any carnivorous animal (even the most gentle, domesticated dog or cat) views the targeted human as prey and attacks him immediately. This Gift can only affect one human target at a time, and does not affect "supernatural" humans (ghouls or mages). Kinfolk, kinain, hedge sorcerers, mediums and those whose supernatural contact is "on the surface" are all potential targets. The effect lasts for one day.

• **Snap Man's Chains (Level Three)** — All Red Talons feel disgust at domesticated animals, both predator and prey. They hate prey animals that simply stand around waiting to be slaughtered, rather than being allowed to live their lives before being eaten. Domesticated predators incense the Talons, for obvious reasons. This Gift allows the werewolf to free domesticated animals from whatever enclosures hold them, physical or otherwise. Horses throw their riders, dogs turn on their masters, farm animals smash through their gates and run. While the Red Talons have known this Gift for centuries, few learned it after the rise of cities, since so few humans there kept animals. However, the Warders of the Land continue to learn the Gift occasionally. Any animal-spirit can teach this Gift.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point and rolls Manipulation + Primal-Urge (difficulty 8). The number of successes indicates the area of the effect. One success drives any animals in a small house feral. Three affects all the animals in a small neighborhood or in a building housing many animals (a pound, for example). Five affects all of the animals within a square mile.

MET: Spend a Gnosis Trait and make a Social Challenge (retest with *Primal-Urge*). Success drives any animals in the immediate vicinity (an apartment, a small house) feral. Spend additional Social Traits to

increase the area of effect — three Traits will affect all the animals in a small neighborhood, an apartment building, an animal shelter, while up to five Traits will affect every animal within a square mile no matter where they are. The effects last for a week.

Lodge of the Predator Kings

The Predators Kings would like nothing better than to see humanity wiped off the face of Gaia, once and for all. They do not rely on Gifts to kill humans, but as they recognize that simply rampaging through cities killing humans is unwise (at least for now), they do learn Gifts that aid them in killing humans without being discovered.

• **Prey's Cry (Level One)** — With this Gift, the Talon may emit a cry for help designed to lead a human into an ambush. In years past, the Talons would use this Gift to mimic the death-cry of a deer or a similar animal, since many humans still hunted their own food. In recent years, since most humans wouldn't know how to kill a wounded animal if their lives depended on it, the Talons use Prey's Cry to imitate the call of a favored pet or another human. A Raven-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player rolls Wits + Expression. The difficulty varies on how complex the imitated sound is. An animal's call, such as a dog whining in pain or a rabbit's death-scream would only be difficulty 5. Imitating a human cry is difficulty 7, while imitating something more specific — "the voice of a young girl" or "a human soldier calling for help" would raise the difficulty to 9. The Red Talon need not actually have heard a human soldier before (for example), but if he uses this Gift successfully, nearby humans will hear a soldier yelling for help.

MET: Make a Mental Challenge (retest with *Expression*). Success allows you to imitate an animal's call, such as a cat's cry, a dog whining or a rabbit in a trap. By spending an additional Mental Trait, you can imitate a human, and for two Mental Traits, you can imitate a specific kind of human (a child or a grown man). To imitate a certain person's voice (such as someone's child or spouse), you must have heard the voice before.

• **Offering of the Slain (Level Two)** — Human corpses are problematic. They don't burn well, the Litany prohibits eating them, and if other humans find them, they tend to get offended and search the area thoroughly. Burying them isn't always an option because humans, being the curious little apes that they are, may eventually dig up an area for whatever reason and find the bodies. The Predator Kings certainly aren't willing to stop killing humans just because disposing of their bodies is a problem, hence this Gift. With but a touch, the Talon can cause dead flesh to decay and crumble to dust in seconds, giving it up as an offering to Gaia. A spirit of decay or decomposition, as well as some scavenger-spirits, can teach this Gift.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point and rolls Gnosis (difficulty 6, although the bodies of fomori or other Wyrm-tainted beings are harder to dispose of and raise the difficulty by one). For each success, the Garou may decompose one human-sized body (slain metis Garou count as two). The werewolf may use this Gift multiple times in a scene to dispose of numerous corpses, but each use requires another point of Gnosis and a new roll.

MET: Spend a Gnosis Trait and make a Gnosis Challenge. With success, you may dispose of a single human-sized body. You may use this Gift multiple times in a scene for numerous corpses, but each use requires another Gnosis Trait spent and another challenge. Metis corpses are considered to be the size of two human bodies, and fomori or other Wyrm-creatures may require further expenditures of Gnosis depending on their size.

Whelp's Compromise

The generic term for any Red Talon who sees redeeming value in humanity is "Whelp." Such Talons usually feel, however, that it is the more vicious Talons who are deluding themselves. Humans are far too numerous to ever destroy, and some of them do try to aid wolves and live in harmony with Gaia. Surely those humans should be spared — it would only be honorable, after all. The Whelps learn Gifts that other Red Talons wouldn't touch, some of them from spirits that smell a bit too much of the Weaver for comfort.

• **Cub's Lesson (Level One)** — Lupus Garou often have difficulty when walking among humans, even as part of a pack. Those few Red Talons that are intrigued rather than enraged by human behavior have even bigger problems, as they cannot expect instruction from the tribe in human ways. This Gift allows a lupus werewolf to learn from a mistake and gain a better understand of human devices and customs, albeit temporarily. Weaver-spirits and (strangely enough) some ancestor-spirits teach this Gift.

System: This Gift, once learned, is always active. Any time the player attempts a roll using an Ability that the character does not possess and fails the roll, she may spend a point of Gnosis and make the roll again, adding one die. This does *not* replace the original roll, so any consequences of failure must still be faced. Note that since a character that has no dots in a Knowledge cannot normally use that Knowledge at all, a character with this Gift must use it to make such an attempt at all.

For example, Eyes-like-Hornets, a Red Talon Ragabash, gets into a conversation with a human woman and attempts to tell her a joke. The werewolf doesn't have

any dots in Expression, however, and fails the Charisma + Expression roll to get the woman to laugh. The player spends a Gnosis point and makes another roll, adding a die. This time, it succeeds. Eyes-like-Hornets recognizes that his first attempt at humor didn't go over as he'd hoped, and covers it up. If Eyes-like-Hornets didn't have any dots in Linguistics and was trying to simply communicate with the woman, his player would have to spend a point of Gnosis for each attempt to do, as he cannot attempt to use a Knowledge he doesn't have.

If the original roll is a botch, the player may still spend a Gnosis point to make another attempt, but the difficulty increases by one.

MET: This Gift is always active once learned. Any time you cannot attempt a retest with an Ability because you do not possess the Ability, spend a Gnosis Trait and make the retest by bidding two Traits. If you succeed, the original results are not negated, so any first-time flops must still be dealt with. Abilities such as *Academics*, *Linguistics*, *Occult*, *Science* (anything related to "book learning") must have the Gnosis Trait spent and two Traits used in bidding before you can even attempt the challenge.

• **Judgment (Level Two)** — The Red Talons of Whelp's Compromise are willing to let the humans who respect Gaia continue to exist. However, despite what some of their tribemates might accuse them of, they are not "soft" on transgressors against Her. With this Gift, the werewolf can judge a human according to the laws of Gaia and decide if she is living in accordance with the natural laws or not. A human who is living well is left alone. A human who is not is shown no mercy. A wolf-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The Garou must lock eyes with the human to use this Gift. The player rolls Perception + Rituals (difficulty 7). With one success, the character only knows in the most black-and-white terms if the human respects Gaia (which doesn't necessarily say anything about her behavior). With three successes, the Garou knows both the human's attitude toward the natural world and how her behavior affects it ("This ape doesn't think about the environment, but does donate money to her local park because she wants her children to enjoy it"). With five successes, the character knows all of that and what she would have to do or say to get the human to live in accordance with Gaia. This can be as simple as "show the human how the world is really being treated" or as complex as "check up on her every week and make sure her home is spiritually clean." Of course, if the Red Talon decides it isn't worth the effort to train a human in what should come naturally, she might very well just remove the human from the world altogether and concentrate on those that are a bit more receptive to learning.

MET: Lock eyes with the target to begin using this Gift, then make a Mental Challenge (retest with *Rituals*). Success allows you to know if the human respects Gaia (which may not say anything about her behavior). Spending additional Mental Traits (up to three) allows for a clearer picture of the human's attitude toward the natural world and how her behavior acts on it, or even what you need to do or say to get the human to change her behavior to live more in harmony with Gaia.

Dying Cubs

The fatalistic Dying Cubs believe that Gaia can be strengthened and healed by the pain and suffering of human beings. Of all the Red Talon "camps" they are the only one that keeps its Gifts secret, and the only one that acts like a true society within the tribe.

• **Reap the Soul (Level Two)** — With this Gift, the Garou can spill the blood of a foe on the ground and immediately reap the energy thus released. Talons who overuse this Gift, however, often begin to smell vaguely of charnel to any werewolf using the Gift: Sense Wyrm. A spirit of decay teaches this Gift. Banes are also capable of teaching it, however, and only the Dying Cubs themselves know which type of spirit teaches it to the Red Talons most often.

System: The Garou must injure an opponent and spill its blood on the ground. The blood must touch the Earth, not concrete or flooring. The player then rolls Gnosis (difficulty of the local Gauntlet). For each success, the Garou may regain a point of Gnosis or two points of Rage.

MET: Inflict damage and spill your opponent's blood. The blood must touch the raw earth, not concrete, wood flooring or something else between the ground and you. Make a Gnosis Challenge; success gains you either a Gnosis Trait or two Rage Traits.

• **Pain of the Land (Level Four)** — The Dying Cubs often take the fight to the Wyrm by waging battle in already tainted locales. This often weakens the Garou, but this Gift evens the odds somewhat. Taught by an earth elemental, Pain of the Land makes the werewolf even more deadly when fighting on tainted ground. She fights as though the putrescence of the corrupted land, be it a landfill, a factory, or simply a city spurs her on and feeds her Rage every second of the battle.

System: Once learned, this Gift is always active. During combat, the difficulties on all attack and damage rolls decrease depending on the level of Wyrm-taint in the area. Fighting in a large city might decrease such difficulties by one, whereas fighting in a Black Spiral Hive would be worth a -3 to combat difficulties. Note that this Gift does not decrease soak difficulties, nor does it aid in using Gifts not directly related to attack or damage (so while the Ahroun Gift: Falling

Touch would receive the benefit, the Philodox Gift: Weak Arm would not).

MET: Once learned, this Gift is considered to be always active. During combat, attack challenges receive bonus Traits based on the level of Wyrm-taint — a fight in a city would receive one, while a fight in a Hive would receive three bonus Traits. These are applicable only to attack challenges, and do not aid Gifts not directly related to attacking or inflicting damage on an opponent.

Winter Packs

Not a "camp" even in a loose sense, the Winter Packs are still taught Gifts that most Garou — even most Talons — are not. The Winter Garou are strongly cautioned not to reveal these Gifts to other tribes.

• **Silence the Slain (Level One)** — Perhaps the most disturbing Gift the Red Talons as a tribe have access to, Silence the Slain allows a Garou to cut a victim off from any means of help by rendering him unable to make sounds of any kind. Even pounding his fists on the window of a passing car will not disturb the passengers therein. A pain-spirit teaches this Gift, the better to enjoy the agony of being hunted down when potential aid stands deafly by.

System: The victim must see the Garou in order for the character to activate this Gift. The player spends one Gnosis point and rolls Charisma + Intimidation (difficulty of the target's Willpower). If the roll succeeds, the target is unable to make sound for one scene. The target cannot speak, and cannot make sound by touching an object. However, the pain-spirit teaching this Gift becomes offended if the werewolf attempts to use Silence the Slain as a "silencer" for an ally, often cursing the Red Talon by removing her ability to howl for a time.

MET: Your target must be within your line of sight and must see you in order for you to activate this Gift. Spend a Gnosis and make a Static Social Challenge (difficulty is the target's Willpower). With success, the target cannot make a sound for one scene, whether by speaking, clapping her hands or touching objects (such as pounding on a window, knocking on a door or banging on pots and pans).

• **Rampage (Level Two)** — No Winter Garou have yet learned this Gift, and only the older Red Talons who had a hand in the Winter Council know it. This Gift, meant as a last resort, allows the user to smash stone, rend metal, and generally destroy any man-made object within reach. A wolverine-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends two Rage points and rolls to check for frenzy. If the Garou frenzies, the Gift activates and the werewolf gains three extra dice on any Strength roll to break, throw, crush, or lift inanimate objects. These dice cannot be used for direct damage to an opponent. The effects of the Gift last for one scene, during which the Garou attacks whatever is within reach, excluding her own packmates (regardless of her comparative Rage and Gnosis scores).

MET: Spend two Rage Traits and make a frenzy test. If frenzy is successful, the Gift activates and the Garou gains Brawny x 2 and Ferocious on any Strength-related challenge against a man-made object, such as breaking, throwing, crushing or lifting. The Gift lasts for one scene; the Garou attacks whatever's in reach, except for packmates, regardless of her Rage and Gnosis scores.

Rites

The Red Talons use rites just as much as other tribes do. Their interpretations of rites just tend to be somewhat simpler. Where a Silver Fang ritual might take several hours and require a great deal of ceremony, a certain ritual garb, and special material components, a Red Talon version of the same rite might require only a loose pile of items associated with the spirits invoked and some elaborate howls. This doesn't mean the Talons have anything less invested in their rites in terms of emotion or reverence, merely that their practices differ from those of the more homid-influenced tribes. In particular, two Red Talons will rarely perform the same ritual exactly the same way — such strict attention to detail and focus on keeping things consistent smacks too much of human behavior to them.

Most of the rites listed here are only used in all-Talon septs and are kept secret from the other tribes. However, this isn't because the Talons are particularly keen on keeping them from the other tribes. They simply feel that these rites aren't anyone else's business. Other tribes, for their part, would probably be astonished that the Talons have developed such useful and unique rituals, given their primal bent. Necessity, however, is indeed the mother of invention.

Rites of Accord

Rite of the Winter Pack

Level Three

This rite is only invoked when a new Winter Pack — a pack of five young Red Talons, one of each auspice, specially trained to kill humans and bring chaos and devastation to the scabs — is formed. Currently, only one such pack exists, but no one can say for certain how many Talon septs house Winter Packs only waiting for this rite to sanctify them before they launch their bloody mission.

The ritemaster assembles the prospective pack on the first night of the new moon, away from the heart of the caern. Other members of the sept may watch from the brush, but are forbidden to make a sound. At the ritemaster's command, each of the cubs in turn states her name and auspice and then howls a variation of the Anthem of War.

The ritemaster then howls to the heavens, calling down blessings from Gaia, the pack's totem and Rorg, the Many-Taloned Hunter upon the Winter Pack. The Pack must then venture to the nearest human settlement and stalk and kill one human each (although they may act in concert to slay a group of humans). Afterward, they howl the Anthem of War in concert, and begin to execute whatever plan they have been given.

System: The ritemaster performs the aforementioned ceremony, and the player rolls Charisma + Rituals (difficulty 7). If the roll succeeds, the Winter Pack has only to complete their first hunt (as described above) to complete the ritual. If they complete this hunt before sunrise, they each gain three temporary Glory and three temporary Honor.

MET: After the above ceremony is performed, the ritemaster makes a Social Challenge (retest with *Rituals*). If the challenge is successful, the Winter Pack need only complete their first hunt and the ritual is accomplished. If the hunt is finished before dawn, each pack member gains three temporary Glory and three temporary Honor.

Caern Rites

Rite of Defiance

Level Two

This rite, a rite that the Talons don't mind teaching to other tribes, is commonly performed by a Red Talon Galliard when a sept suffers a setback. The sept gathers at the caern's heart and the Galliard begins the rite by recounting the sept's recent defeats. The Talons believe in facing their difficulties realistically, and it is considered proper to allow the ritemaster to finish before the next phase of the rite begins.

When the ritemaster finishes his howl, the other Garou begin their own cries. The Talons howl of hope and of possibility, beginning with whichever of them has the most hope to offer. As the howls continue, others join in, until eventually the entire sept stands together, howling their defiance to the sky, their spirits rekindled.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Rituals (difficulty 7); her character finishes her song of woe. If successful, the other Talons take up the howl, and all Garou present regain one point of temporary Willpower. If the roll is a botch, no one feels hopeful enough to begin the rite, and everyone present loses a point of Willpower (the ritemaster also loses a point of temporary Wisdom).

MET: Make a Social Challenge (retest with *Rituals*). With success, all the Talons take up the howl and all Garou present regain a Willpower Trait. If the ritemaster loses the challenge, make two Simple Tests. If one test is lost, the rite simply doesn't work. If both tests are lost, no one feels hopeful enough to keep up the rite, and everyone present loses a Willpower Trait, plus the ritemaster loses a Wisdom Renown.

Warding the Lingering Human

Level Two

While Red Talons do not normally have any truck with the restless souls of dead humans, they do manage to create a fair number of ghosts. Human ghosts are capable of doing a great deal of harm to a Red Talon sept, should they put their vengeful minds to it. Leading enemies to the heart of the caern, frightening prey animals away from hunting Red Talons, and generally disrupting the harmony of the area with their very presence are all possibilities. The Red Talons developed (or learned from the Silent Striders, depending on whom one asks) this rite to drive off or forbid a human ghost from entering the bawn of a caern.

Performing the Warding the Lingering Human rite requires the ritemaster to have a piece of the human's body or something that he touched in life (if this object was important to him, the rite works even more effectively). The Talon must then stand behind the object with his back to the caern and snarl, howl and bristle at the object. After a few moments, the Talon grabs the object in his teeth and shakes it until it falls to pieces. The ghost is thereafter forbidden to enter the bawn of the caern without expending a great deal of energy.

System: The Talon must perform the rite as described above. The player rolls Manipulation + Rituals. The difficulty is usually equal to the ghost's Willpower, but if the Talon uses an object important to the ghost in the rite, the difficulty drops by two. If the roll succeeds, the ghost cannot enter the bawn of the caern without spending one point of Willpower for each success the player achieved on the roll each day (so if the player rolls three successes, the ghost must spend three Willpower for each day she wishes to remain within the bawn). Note that this rite has no effect on the walking dead or on any other kind of spirit.

MET: The Talon performs the rite, then makes a Static Social Challenge (difficulty of the wraith's Willpower, but this is reduced by two if the ritemaster uses something important to the ghost, such as a Fetter). With success, the ghost cannot enter the bawn without spending a Willpower (or two if a Fetter or something important from its life was used) *each day*. This rite has no effect on Risen, other walking dead or spirits other than wraiths.

Mystic Rites

Rite of Feeding the Land

Level Two

The rite is the province of the Dying Cubs camp. It allows the Garou to use the pain of a dying human (or Garou, in theory) to feed and heal the land. The Dying Cubs cannot say where they learned this rite; every sept that knows it seems to have learned it from a visiting Talon, but no one can trace the rite back to its origin.

The ritemaster and any other Garou that participate bind and torture the victim for as long as they wish. The longer the victim remains alive and in pain, the more potent the rite. The Garou may use any means of inflicting pain they wish, and may even heal the victim to prolong his agony provided the victim always suffers from one health level of damage (if the victim is ever fully healed, the rite fails). When the victim can bear no more and finally expires, the rite master spills the victim's blood on the ground to replenish the land. Wyrm-taint is burned away and even the touch of the Weaver weakens somewhat.

System: Any characters involved in this rite lose one point of temporary Honor for torturing a helpless victim (the Dying Cubs usually don't care). Any player whose character participates in the torture of the victim must roll Wits + Intimidation at a difficulty of the victim's Willpower in an extended, resisted test against the victim's Willpower (difficulty 8). Each turn, if the torturer has more successes than the victim does, the victim loses a temporary Willpower point. If the torturer and the victim are even or if the victim has more successes, the victim does not lose Willpower. The Storyteller must decide based on what kind of torture is being employed how often the victim takes damage. The torturers can keep building the rite until the victim runs out of Willpower and health levels.

When the torturers have extracted all that they can from the victim (i.e., said victim runs out of Willpower and/or dies) the ritemaster rolls Wits + Rituals (difficulty 7). For a 20-foot radius per point of Willpower and health levels taken from the victim, the area is cleansed of Wyrm-taint (as if the Rite of Cleansing had bee performed). Also, the Gauntlet in that area drops by two (to no lower than three) for one full month.

MET: Torturing a helpless victim means the loss of a temporary Honor for each participant (and possibly more if they're found out by other Garou). Torture involves making a Static Mental Challenge against the victim's Willpower (retest with Intimidation) to break his spirit, plus inflicting wounds. The Storyteller decides how many level of damage (and what kind) are being inflicted with the particular tortures used. The rite can build until the victim runs out of Willpower and health levels. When the victim is sufficiently spent (runs out of Willpower and/or dies), the ritemaster makes a standard rites challenge. Success means that a 20-foot radius per Willpower Trait and health level taken from the victim cleanses the area of Wyrm-taint, and reduces the area Gauntlet rating by two (to no lower than 3) for one month.

As per the sidebar, the rite is almost certainly not Gaian, the area's cleansing is superficial, and any spiritual guardians will ignore subsequent attacks by Wyrm-creatures.

Feeding the Land with Pain

As the reader has likely guessed, the Rite of Feeding the Land is probably not Gaian in origin. Every time the rite is performed on a given area, the area is cleansed superficially, but if the Wyrm's minions ever do decide to attack, any spiritual guardians in the area will ignore the attackers. The exact origins of the Rite of Feeding the Land and what manifestation of the Wyrm, if any, is responsible for it, as well as to what degree the Dying Cubs have been corrupted, are in the hands of the Storyteller.

Note that "not at all" is a possible response — Gaia is just as often cruel as she is kind. The bodies of those unjustly slain feed the ground as well as true enemies of Gaia. The Dying Cubs might be unknowingly serving the Wyrm or they might have discovered an effective, if unpleasant, way to cleanse the land. Again, this is left to the Storyteller's discretion.

Rite of Prophecy

Level Three

Similar to the Rite of Weeping for a Vision (see the **Werewolf Players Guide**), this rite allows the Red Talon to ask Gaia for a glimpse of things to come. Talons of all auspices learn this rite, but the Theurges are normally the only ones who use it more than once.

The Red Talon must go somewhere that she will not be disturbed. She must then find something that holds her attention; the movements of clouds in the sky, a parade of ants marching to their home, the swirling of running water — any of these will do. The supplicant simply allows her mind to unfocus and waits for the vision from Gaia.

The vision thus granted may be helpful and might well grant the Red Talon some insight into an immediate problem. However, Red Talon "history" is fraught with tales of Talons who have foreseen events such as nuclear blasts, the War of Rage, the War of Tears, and battles that might or might not be the Apocalypse itself — and simply haven't been able to interpret the visions in time. While nearly every Master of the Rite at a Red Talon caern knows the Rite of Prophecy, they rarely use it. To know the truth, but not what the truth means is more painful than most Garou can bear.

System: The player rolls Willpower (difficulty 7) to focus the character's attention, and then rolls Wits + Rituals (difficulty 7) to begin the vision. The vision is left entirely in the Storyteller's hands, but it is recommended that the more Pure Breed the character possesses, the more likely she will see a vision pertaining to the tribe (or the Garou Nation) as a whole rather than her or her pack.

MET: Make a Willpower Challenge to focus attention, then make a Mental Challenge (retest with *Rituals*). The resulting vision is up to the Storyteller.

Rite of False Justice

Level Four

Red Talon lore holds that since the tribe never received a vote on the Litany's tenets, they are not bound by them. While the tribe follows the Litany for the most part, sometimes a Talon is forced to act against the Litany in order to follow her calling as a true predator. The Red Talons recognize that the other tribes may punish the Talon for her "transgression," but have devised a means to remove the stigma from her.

This rite is only performed if the ritemaster and the sept leaders feel that another tribe has unjustly subjected a Talon to a Punishment Rite (such as Ostracism, Voice of the Jackal, or Stone of Scorn). The Rite of False Justice cannot disrupt a rite that also confers a death sentence, such as The Hunt or Gaia's Vengeful Teeth (though the tribe may physically protect a Talon whom they feel is being persecuted by such a sentence).

The Rite of False Justice is always performed on the half moon. The ritemaster calls the punished Garou before her and asks her to describe in what capacity she was serving Gaia when she broke the Litany. If the Garou's answer satisfies the ritemaster, she howls to the Philodox moon to lift the stigma from the supplicant, as she was serving her true nature, not the false laws, when she transgressed. The Talon is then freed from any Punishment Rite that she currently suffers from and is usually granted a measure of Renown for her honesty and bravery.

System: The ritemaster hears the supplicant's case as described above. If the ritemaster judges the Talon worthy of her suffering, no further penalty is incurred. If the ritemaster feels the Talon has been wrongly judged, the player rolls Wits + Rituals (difficulty of the level of the Punishment Rite under which the target currently suffers + 5). Success cancels the mystical effects (such as the altered voice granted by Voice of the Jackal) of any previously performed Punishment rite on the supplicant. Any Renown reimbursement or award is up to the Storyteller.

MET: After the ritemaster hears the supplicant, she may either decide that the punishment is appropriate (and do nothing more), or she may decide the Talon has been misjudged and make a Static Mental Challenge (the Punishment Rite's level + 5, retest with Rituals). Success cancels any mystical effects of the previously performed Punishment Rite. The spirits are likely to be particular regarding who benefits from this rite, and some crimes may be considered too heinous to be pardoned in this fashion.

Rite of Gaia's Rebirth

Level Five

This extremely powerful rite has only recently been rediscovered and is currently known only to one sept of Red Talons, the Sept of the First Rage (see the Appendix). Gaia's Rebirth allows the ritemaster to sacrifice her own Gnosis, and, if necessary, her own life to reclaim Gaia's pure form from human defilement. The form of such corruption does not matter — the rite would work just as well destroying a path through a state park as it would leveling a building in a major city. The end result is the same: The land returns to the state it would be in had humans never seen it. Trees push their way through concrete, cars are covered and crushed by vines and overgrown with moss, although any organic matter (such as corpses) is consumed at the normal rate.

Performing this rite is complex. It requires a precise sense of timing, and the ritemaster must be guided by nothing but instinct. If she begins the rite even one minute too early or too late, the rite will fail, but the energies released may well destroy her. Gaia's Rebirth can only be performed on the last night of the waning crescent moon, the night before the start of the Ragabash cycle. The climax of rite must occur between the setting of the moon and rising of the sun, and the rite must be performed at the site to be purified (meaning a Red Talon cannot perform the rite outside city limits and expect the city itself to be consumed).

Isn't This a Bit Overpowered?

So, what's to stop a player from building a Red Talon character with 5 dots of Rituals, a lot of Ancestors and Pure Breed, and Gnosis 10, and performing this rite in, say, downtown Detroit?

Well, the Storyteller, for starters.

The Rite of Gaia's Rebirth is meant to be a world-altering phenomenon. Currently, only one Garou in the *entire world* knows the rite, and he is very particular about whom he teaches. Even learning of the rite's existence should take several stories, and learning it surely enough to use it might take an entire chronicle. Using this rite in an urban environment should meet all sorts of opposition, from servants of the Wyrm and the Weaver to other Garou (the Glass Walkers might not take kindly to an entire city being destroyed), to vampires, to any other beings who might be offended by this kind of disruption. The would-be ritemaster herself should confront some pretty serious decisions about whether or not the long-term consequences of this rite would be worth the short-term satisfaction of the devastation it would cause. And above all, the Storyteller should consider how disruptive it would be to her chronicle.

Again, as a climax to a long-running chronicle, successful use of this rite would be superb. As a casual manner to cause some chaos, we don't recommend it. Garou are capable of causing chaos without any rites at all.

The rite requires a special moot, attended by no fewer than six Garou (the ritemaster plus one werewolf of each auspice). The moot begins with howls to any totem spirits in the area (a caern totem, if the rite is performed at a caern, the totems of any packs present, and the tribe totems of all Garou present) in addition to an elaborate howl to Gaia Herself. The ritemaster must walk or run in a circle around the center of the area to be cleansed, howling to Gaia to awaken the spirits of the land to reclaim it. She gives of herself — this can be physical, in which case she bleeds onto ground, or spiritual, in which case she simply howls and gives up part of her own spirit. In either case, if the rite is performed correctly, the plant life in the area quickly overtakes any human "development" and restores Gaia's true order.

System: The player must first roll Perception + Primal-Urge (difficulty 9) to be sure of the correct timing for the rite. The Storyteller may want to make this roll in secret, so that the player does not know the results. If the roll succeeds, the character knows when to start the rite so that the end coincides with the moon and sun properly. If the roll fails, the character is unsure, and must wait a full month before attempting the rite again. If the roll is a botch, the character is sure of the timing, but has actually miscalculated. She will automatically fail at performing the rite (see below).

The character must lead the moot as described above. At the moot's climax, the player rolls Wits + Rituals (difficulty 9, or 7 if the character has both the Pure Breed *and* Ancestors Backgrounds at 2 or higher). If the roll fails, the rite fails, and the character receives three health levels of aggravated damage. These appear as teardrop-shaped wounds on her body, similar to the "Tears of Gaia" commonly suffered by Garou who attempt the Rite of Caern Building. If the roll is a botch, the character loses Gnosis or Stamina as described below, but the rite still fails.

If the roll succeeds, however, the player must decide how much land to reclaim from human corruption. For each dot of Stamina or two dots of Gnosis the character is willing to expend, roughly one square acre of land reverts to the state it would be in had humans never developed it all at. This rite does not destroy any materials — that is, buildings and vehicles do not simply disappear — but the plant growth will quickly crush and cover any human structures. Living things within the area of effect are not affected (except that they may find themselves trapped in buildings or carried to the tops of very large trees). The Gnosis or Stamina spent on this rite is considered permanently gone unless bought up again with experience.

MET: First, the ritemaster must determine the proper time for the rite by making a Static Mental Challenge

(against nine Traits, retest with *Primal-Urge*). Success gives a green light to continue. If the challenge fails, make two Simple Tests. Losing one test means the time is not right this month and the ritemaster should wait another month. Losing both tests means the results appear to indicate now is the right time, but the ritemaster has in fact miscalculated. Of course, she can press forward if she chooses, which is license for the Storyteller to unleash whatever hell he deems appropriate. The moot proceeds as described above. At the rite's conclusion, the ritemaster makes a Static Mental Challenge (against nine Traits, or seven Traits if she has both *Pure Breed* and *Ancestors* at two levels or better; retest with *Rituals*). If she miscalculated the ritual's timing, the ritual automatically fails, and she suffers three aggravated health levels of damage, which manifest as the "tears of Gaia" similar to those suffered in a caern-building. If the ritual's timing is correct and she succeeds in the rite, she must decide how much land to reclaim. For one permanent Stamina-related Trait or two permanent Gnosis sacrificed, one square acre of land will revert to its original wild state as if humans had never touched it. Nothing is destroyed or killed, but the plant growth is riotous enough to overtake buildings and cars. Any Stamina or Gnosis sacrificed is permanent until bought up with experience.

Punishment Rites

Rite of the Human Mind

Level Four

The Red Talons don't employ a wide variety of Punishment Rites. A serious offense usually merits a sentence of ostracism from the sept (or from the tribe, in extreme cases) or death. However, sometimes an offender must be disciplined severely but left alive and intact. On these occasions, the Talons employed the feared Rite of the Human Mind.

All Red Talons — indeed, all Garou — have both a human-mind and a wolf-heart, according to the Talons. The human mind is dominant in Homid form, while the wolf-heart dominates in Lupus form. A Red Talon who relies too heavily on his human-mind, or shows mercy or compassion to a human that then comes back to bite him (as is often the case), might be subject to this rite. Any incompetence or faulty logic that the elders believe to stem from the human-mind, or relying on human babble when instinct is clearly called for, might also result in the Rite of the Human Mind being employed.

To perform this rite, the ritemaster must assume Homid form, as must the accused. The ritemaster calls the accused by his name in whatever human tongue is convenient, and then changes to Lupus form and howls in derision. Any observers also take up the howl, but at no time during these howls is the accused referred to by his howl-name. When the howls die down, the accused finds himself unable to access his wolf-heart, even in Lupus form. This punishment may last for any amount of time, but the Talons usually consider it too cruel to maintain it for longer than one moon.

System: Roll Charisma + Rituals (difficulty 7). If the rite succeeds, the accused does not gain Perception bonuses while in Lupus, Hispo, or Crinos forms and is considered to have no dots in Primal-Urge for as long as the rite lasts. On lupus Garou, the attendant discomfort this brings also levies +3 to all Willpower difficulties and a -2 to initiative results for the duration of the punishment. The character thinks like a human being, even in Lupus form, and a player whose character is subjected to this rite should do her best to roleplay this experience. The Storyteller is free to impose additional penalties if she feels that the player is having too easy a time of it.

MET: Make a standard rites challenge. With success, the accused is considered to have no levels of Primal-Urge as long as his punishment lasts and gains no Perception-related bonus Traits in Lupus, Hispo or Crinos. During Willpower Challenges, he suffers a three-Trait penalty. Even in Lupus form, he must think like a human.

Kucha Ekundu

The African hunting dogs are not true wolves, but are the closet thing that Africa has to them. Some years ago, the Red Talons took up the challenge of breeding with the animals and helping them to survive. They have succeeded, at least in part.

The African hunting dogs face many of the same threats from humans that wolves do. Cars, poachers, disease, and poisons claim many of them, and shrinking habitat also endangers these predators. However, the Red Talons protect these new Kin as fiercely as they do any European or American wolf.

Basic Information

African hunting dogs are slightly smaller than wolves, and hunt in a much-different fashion. While wolf packs use smell to track and stalk their prey, hunting dogs use sight and do not pay attention to wind direction. Wolves will hunt under cover, but hunting dogs simply charge their prey, relying on their speed (up to 35mph for more than a mile) to bring down prey. They don't fight over kills, but rather allow young and disabled pack members to eat first. They are very affectionate toward each other, and although they have a hierarchy, it isn't as firmly established (or at least not as obvious) as with wolves.

Red Talons descended from African hunting dogs therefore make the following alterations:

- **Attributes:** In Lupus form, add +3 to Dexterity but no bonus to Strength. Pursuit difficulties drop by one.

• **Senses:** Perception rolls based on scent only receive a -1 difficulty, rather than the usual -2. Rolls based on sight, however, have their difficulties reduced by two.

• **Pure Breed:** No Kucha Ekundu may have a Pure Breed score higher than three.

MET: Kucha Ekundu-descended Red Talons have the following adjustments. They gain Quick x 3 in Lupus form, but no Strength-related bonuses, and a bonus Physical Trait when in pursuit. They gain a bonus Mental Trait during Perception-related scent challenges (such as sniffing out a trail), and two bonus Mental Traits during sight-related challenges. They may never have *Pure Breed* higher than three.

Gifts

The Kucha Ekundu make use of many of the same Gifts as the rest of the tribe, but have learned others as well, due to their different environment.

• **Speed of Thought (Level One)** — As the Silent Strider Gift.

MET: As per the Silent Strider Gift. See **Laws of the Wild**.

• **Feed the Pack (Level Two)** — Useful during droughts and other times of want, this Gift allows the werewolf to "eat for the pack." Any food the Kucha Ekundu ingests feeds not only him, but the rest of his pack as well. The spirit of a hunting dog teaches this Gift.

System: The player simply spends a Gnosis point before the character eats, and rolls Gnosis (difficulty 6 for packmates, 7 for Kinfolk). For each success, whatever the character eats also nourishes another being.

MET: Spend a Gnosis Trait and make a Gnosis Challenge. With success, whatever you eat nourishes one other being.

• **Predator's Many Eyes (Level Three)** — The African savanna holds predators of various stripes: Lions, cheetahs, hyenas and many others. The Kucha Ekundu do not regard themselves as "Lords of the Savannah," especially with the Ahadi in place, but do wish to do their job as Garou. This Gift facilitates that job, allowing the werewolf to "mark" a predator and thereafter look through its eyes.

System: As the Red Talon Gift: Territory. Obviously, Predator's Many Eyes does not require the Garou to urinate on the animal it wishes to mark. The player must merely roll Charisma + Animal Ken (difficulty 7) to mark the predator. Using this Gift on other Fera is possible but requires the Fera's consent. In all other respects, this Gift functions as Territory.

MET: As the Gift: *Territory* (above). The Gift does not require the urine markings as per Territory, only a Social Challenge (retest with *Animal Ken*) to mark the animal. This Gift may be used on Fera (such as the Simba and Swara Bastet or the Ajaba), but only if the Fera has given consent; the challenge to mark is the same.

• **Clenched Jaw (Level Four)** — As the Ahroun Gift.

MET: As per the Ahroun Gift. See **Laws of the Wild**.

• **Pact (Level Five)** — When the Red Talons first came to Africa and struck their deal with the Mokolé, the mighty werecrocodiles agreed that if the Garou could breed with the hunting dogs and do their appointed task in Africa without making war on the other Fera, they could stay. The Red Talons have (thus far) made good on their promises, and the eldest of the Kucha Ekundu have been rewarded with this Gift. The werewolf may call upon the Mokolé-mbembe for aid, in battle or otherwise. The spirits of the Dragon Kings teach this Gift.

System: The player spends two Gnosis points and rolls Charisma + Rituals (difficulty 7). If the roll succeeds, the Garou receives aid within one turn, be it from a local clutch or from the spirits who witnessed the pacts between the Memory of Gaia and the Garou. The Storyteller has the final say over exactly what form the Garou's succor takes, but it might range from rampaging werecrocodiles arriving to fight with the Kucha Ekundu to great ancestor spirits called forth by the Mokolé to give the Garou advice.

MET: Spend two Gnosis and make a Social Challenge (retest with *Rituals*). With success, you receive aid within one turn, from either a local clutch or spirits that witnessed the original pacts between the Garou and Mokolé. The Storyteller determines what form the aid takes.

For more information on the Mokolé-mbembe, see **Mokolé (MET: Changing Breeds Book 2)**.

Merits and Flaws

The following Merits and Flaws are suitable for Red Talon characters, and may (at the Storyteller's discretion) be taken by other lupus characters as well. Remember that all Merits and Flaws are optional.

Homid Ancestor (2 pt. Merit)

The character must have at least one dot in the Ancestors Background to purchase this Merit. Somewhere in the far-flung mists of the past, you have a human-born relative. Maybe a homid relative of yours bred with a wolf that was Kin to the Red Talons, perhaps a more recent relative was actually born to another tribe. Either way, you have a slightly better grip on human thought than most lupus. Reduce the difficulty of rolls involving logic and abstract thinking by one, and the difficulties of using Ancestors to access Abilities such as Crafts, Melee, Etiquette, and Politics likewise drop by one (Firearms and Computers are probably still off-limits). On the minus side, if word of

your lineage gets out, you might lose some temporary Honor depending on what kind of sept you live in.

Winter Garou (4 pt. Merit)

You have been chosen as one of the Winter Garou. Unless you are a member of an all-Red Talon pack, you are probably a spy and instigator for your tribe, and are acting under orders from a superior. In game terms, you effectively have Mentor 3, and can expect favors from your tribe (including having the Rite of False Justice, above, performed for you if necessary). You may also learn Winter Pack Gifts, and receive extra Renown from your tribe for your efforts.

However, you are expected to kill humans at any opportunity, and the only excuse that the tribe will except for failing to do so is that your pack was watching and would have discovered your allegiance. If you are ever found out, the Red Talons will either spirit you away or kill you rather than allow the truth of the Winter Council to become common knowledge in the Garou Nation.

Human Attention (1/3/5 pt. Flaw)

Humans have spotted you in a place where no wolves should be, and now they're trying to find you again. This Flaw assumes you were seen in a place you frequent (like the edge of a sept) and can't just avoid from now on. For one point, word of "wolves in our forest" has leaked out, but hasn't got much negative attention, although scientists may arrive to tag and release your Kin (which will lead to other problems anyway). For three points, the locals take offense to lupine infringement on "their" land and have started carrying rifles and looking for wolves. For five points, you've caught the attention of a supernatural being or beings who recognizes (or at least suspects) your true nature — a local group of Imbued, a powerful vampire, or a Pentex branch.

Totems

The Red Talons favor the following totems, although other tribes sometimes follow them as well. Note that Raven and Sphinx take on rather different faces when serving as Red Talon totems than they present to other tribes.

Totem of Cunning

Sphinx

Background Cost: 6

Sphinx is typically regarded as a gamester and an enigmatic spirit. Older myths, however, paint her as a

vicious predator and just lately she has been getting back to her roots. Lupus packs that follow Sphinx often surprise their fellows with their martial prowess and their clever tactics.

Traits: A predominantly lupus pack that follows Sphinx reduces the difficulty of all pack tactics by one. The pack may also draw on Enigmas 2 and 5 points of Willpower per story.

Ban: Sphinx periodically provides her pack with challenges, often in the form of riddles or tests of endurance, but sometimes combat. If at least one member of the pack can successfully meet the challenge, she continues her patronage. If not, she withdraws (or attacks, if the pack really botched the challenge).

MET: Sphinx's children may draw on *Enigmas* x 2 and five Willpower Traits *per story*. Predominantly lupus packs enjoy a one-Trait bonus on pack tactics challenges. Sphinx tests her packs every so often; if not even one member can meet her test, she withdraws her patronage (or even attacks if the challenge was really botched).

Totem of Respect

Old Wolf of the Woods

Background Cost: 6

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the Old Wolf of the Woods is a totem of spirituality rather than war. He misses the days when all Garou looked to him as their spiritual father, and resents the growing number of homid and metis werewolves as compared to the dwindling lupus. Old Wolf of the Woods is a sad spirit — he knows that he will only exist so long as wolves roam the face of Gaia. When the last wolf falls, the totem will cease to be.

Traits: Each pack member gains three points of temporary Honor when Old Wolf of the Woods is chosen as the pack totem, and Red Talons also treat such packs with great respect. Old Wolf also grants his pack the ability to call on his knowledge: each pack member may call upon Ancestors 5 once per story, but may not access the Abilities that are restricted to lupus characters. Finally, werewolves who follow Old Wolf of the Woods have an easier time stepping sideways; reduce all difficulties related to piercing the Gauntlet by one.

Ban: Old Wolf of the Woods doesn't hate homid or metis Garou, but will never accept them as children. Only lupus Garou may follow Old Wolf as a totem.

MET: Old Wolf's children gain three temporary Honor when they choose him as their pack totem, and Red Talons are likely to treat them with great respect. Each pack member may call on *Ancestors* x 5 once per story, drawing on Old Wolf's knowledge. Old Wolf's children also may pierce the Gauntlet as if the rating was one lower. Old Wolf never accepts homid or metis Garou as children.

Totems of War

Badger

Background Cost: 7

A strong hunter and powerful digger, Badger isn't a common totem, but is very pleased when a pack chooses him. His sharp teeth and strong jaws can shear bone, and he revels in being underestimated. He prefers packs that don't charge directly into the fray but search for their opponents' weakness and exploit them. If cornered, Badger is capable of terrifying rage — to his mind, it is better to be injured in battle than killed in captivity.

Traits: Packs that follow Badger may call upon Stealth 2 and the Metis Gift: Burrow. Each member of the pack gains one dot of Stamina. The pack may draw on 5 points of Rage per story.

Ban: Followers of Badger may not make their homes in pre-constructed dwellings, but must either sleep in the wild or build their own homes.

MET: Badger's children gain *Stealth* x 2 and the Gift: *Burrow* (as the Metis Gift; see **Laws of the Wild**). They also gain the Trait *Tireless*. The pack may draw on five Rage Traits *per story*.

Wolverine

Background Cost: 6

Wolverine, like Badger, is a mighty combatant and an unquenchable font of Rage. However, he's anything but subtle. Packs who follow Wolverine are expected to kill their foes mercilessly, and to protect each other and their homes with their every ounce of Rage they can muster.

Traits: Wolverine grants his children a permanent point of Stamina to make them harder to fell in battle. Also, he grants each of them a vision of his own Rage-filled heart, granting them each a dot of Rage that can never be spent or lost. Children of Wolverine, therefore, will never lose the wolf or run out of Rage in combat. If his children live long enough to reach sufficient rank, he might also teach them the Gift: Mother's Rage (see above).

Ban: Wolverine's children must always spend Rage in combat and never show mercy to their foes.

MET: Wolverine's children gain the Trait *Rugged* and a Rage Trait that can never be spent or lost. At sufficient rank, they may learn *Mother's Rage*. They must always spend Rage in combat and never show mercy to a foe.

Totem of Wisdom

Wild Raven

Background Cost: 6

A scavenger and a trickster, Raven follows wolf packs to feast on their leavings, and shows his primal,

animalistic face to the Red Talons in the deep woods. Packs who follow the "lupus version" of Raven are often shocked that Raven's more citified incarnation provides money to other Garou.

Traits: Raven is delicate but nimble — he knows that one strong blow will kill him, and thus tries to stay out of harm's way. Each of his children adds one dot of Wits and can call upon Dodge 2. Packs who follow Raven gain one point of Wisdom upon choosing him as their totem.

Ban: Raven asks that Garou who follow him always leave part of a carcass behind for him to feast on. He's partial to eyes.

MET: Raven's children gain the Trait Clever, and two levels of *Dodge*. Raven's packs also gain a temporary Wisdom on choosing him as their totem. Raven asks that his children always leave part of a carcass behind for him, especially the eyes.

Items of Power

Red Talons don't fashion fetishes often. When they do feel the need to craft fetishes, they are usually simple affairs meant to augment the Red Talon's capabilities or allow her to accomplish something she couldn't on her own. As previously stated, Red Talons rarely craft weapon fetishes.

Some examples of Red Talon fetishes and talens are listed below.

Fetishes

Cub's Vigor

Level 2, Gnosis 6

Usually bound into a small piece of bone or skin, the Cub's Vigor fetish allows the user to call upon the seemingly boundless energy of a young pup. Upon activation, the character is immediately refreshed and can function for eight hours normally without sleep or food. If the activation roll garners three or more successes, the player may also choose to regain a point of temporary Willpower or heal one bashing or lethal health level. This fetish can be used only once per day.

MET: With activation, you can function for eight hours without sleep or food. You may also choose to either regain a temporary Willpower or heal a bashing or lethal health level. This fetish may only be used once per day.

Bramble Branch

Level 4, Gnosis 8

The Talon binds the spirit of a thicket or a bramble into a large, dead branch. The branch is then placed over a path or somewhere that the undergrowth is light. When the fetish is activated, brambles, thorn bushes, poison ivy, and all manner of unpleasant or poisonous plants spring up from the ground and block the area. The more activation successes the player rolls, the larger an area is blocked. The blockage remains until torn down (on purpose or by weather) or until the Red Talon willingly de-activates the fetish; the Talon can remove the branch from the path without disrupting the growth.

MET: Activation causes all kinds of nasty or poisonous plants to spring up in a five-foot-square area. The plants remain until torn down or the fetish is deactivated. The branch can be removed without disrupting the growth.

Scar Fetishes

Scars are permanent, cannot be stolen, and easily portable, making them perfect for Red Talons. However, they are also very difficult to create, so even among the wolf tribe, they aren't terribly common.

A scar fetish is created when a spirit is bound into a ritual scar on a werewolf's body. The scar in question is sometimes inflicted deliberately in the shape of an appropriate glyph, but more often a werewolf who suffers a battle scar will receive a scar fetish as recognition for his sacrifice. Some examples of scar fetishes include:

Cunning Fetish

Level 1, Gnosis 5

Powered the spirit of a raccoon or equally clever little beast, this fetish allows the player to add activation successes to her character's Enigmas for the scene.

MET: Activation grants two levels of *Enigmas* for the rest of the scene.

Swift Fetish

Level 2, Gnosis 6

A swift-moving bird spirit or hare-spirit powers this fetish. For every two activation successes, the character's running speed doubles for one scene (so four successes would quadruple the character's speed for a scene).

MET: Activation doubles the character's running speed.

Might Fetish

Level 3, Gnosis 7

The spirit of a strong animal, such as a moose or a bear, is bound into the scar. The player may activate the fetish and add the activation successes to the character's Athletics for one scene.

MET: Activation grants two levels of Athletics for the rest of the scene.

Talens

The Rite of Binding allows the Talons to adapt to a given circumstance without imprisoning a spirit for long. The tribe therefore makes more frequent use of talens than fetishes.

Cleansing Sand

Gnosis 5

Used primarily by Talons who like to keep their enemies' skulls as trophies, the Cleansing Sand is created by binding ant-spirits into a small quantity of sand. The sand is then poured over a corpse. The ant-spirits strip the flesh cleaning, leaving dry bone behind. One "dose" of sand is enough to clean a human-sized skull.

Purifying Root

Gnosis 6

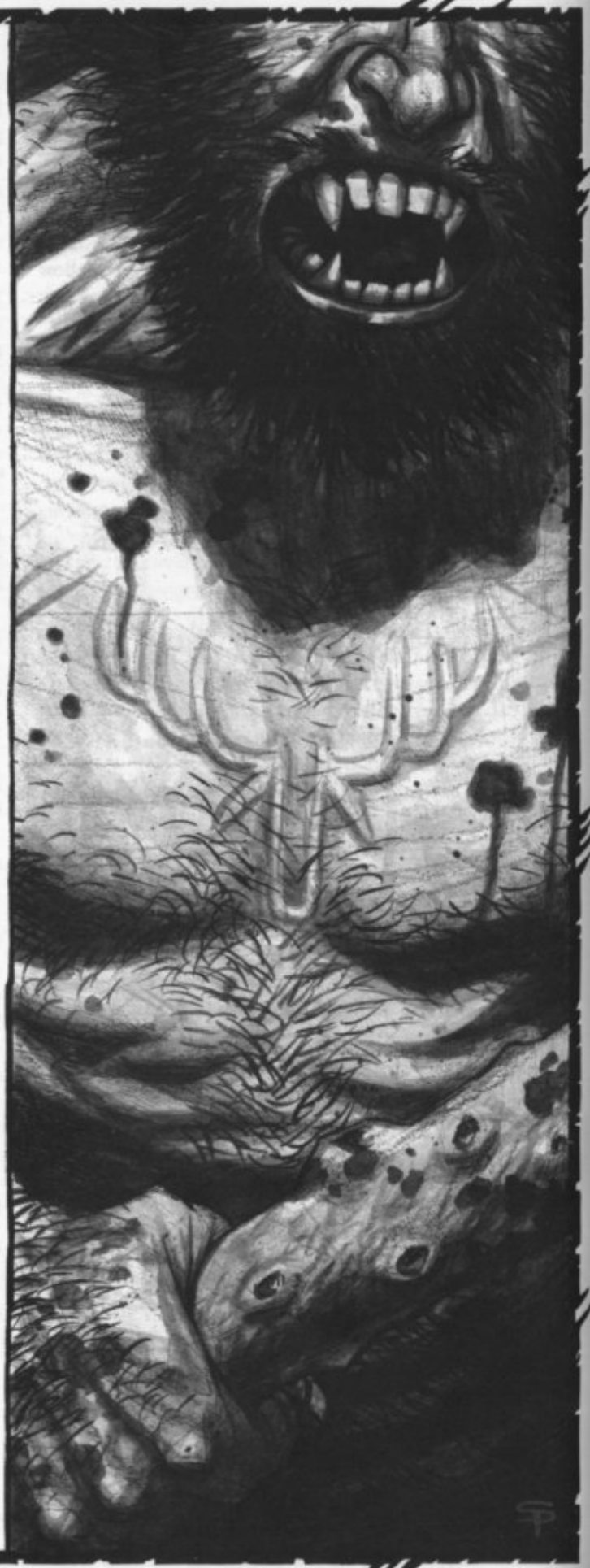
Even the Garou can be poisoned, and the Red Talons don't commonly know a Gift to counter such attacks. However, by binding a snake spirit to a root, a Red Talon can create a talen that, when chewed, eliminates any natural poison in her body. It is also possible to chew the root a bit to activate it, and then give it to a Kin wolf that has been poisoned.

Roleplaying a Red Talon

Taking on the challenge of a lupus character can be daunting by itself, but playing a Red Talon is even more so. A lupus of any other tribe, after all, might have learned some human mannerisms from her homid tribemates. Likewise, she knows that she is part human and can see human Kinfolk in her own tribe. Even if humans have done some pretty stupid things to the world, there's hope just because of those Kin.

The Red Talons do not see it that way. They have never bred with humans and they feel that this fact gives them a purity that the other tribes do not have. The Red Talons breed very few metis, and only a bare handful of those are raised as Talons rather than given to another tribe. The tribe as the Garou Nation knows it would *cease to exist* if a homid Red Talon were ever excepted, because the defining principle of the tribe is that it has no human blood.

So what does that mean to the player? It means that a Red Talon is a wolf, and then a werewolf, and never a human. Human beings see the world as ours. We can do anything, given enough time to figure it out. There is no such thing as an insurmountable obstacle, and most humans "know" that we are meant to rule the world by either divine edict or by right of our superior minds. We might be destroying the environment, but *we* will find a way to get along—and never mind the rest of the planet. We'll find substitutes for anything we



destroy along the way. The fact that other species might have intrinsic value either doesn't occur to us, either because we don't think about it, or because we come up with excuses why they don't have intrinsic value (they don't have souls, they are unthinking beasts, etc.). Whatever our rationalizations, the underlying attitude is this: Humans are important. Humans are special. The rest of the animals on Earth are not, or are only special insofar as they relate to humans.

The Red Talons just don't see it that way.

They know that humans are important. They care deeply about humans. They hate us with a passion that is simply frightening. The archetypal Red Talon doesn't see a soul in a human being, just as a human being doesn't see a soul in an animal. They don't feel the slightest bit of guilt or hesitancy about killing humans, not because they are cruel or because such emotions don't come naturally to them, but because they know that we deserve it. We would do the same to them, given half a chance. We've been doing it for centuries.

Playing a Red Talon can be a journey of discovery for the character as she finds redeeming value in humanity, but this *is* the World of Darkness, after all. Even though a player's character is often the exception to the rule, it's likely that the discovery she will make is that humans hate and fear wolves and have no idea how much damage they do, and that they truly do deserve to be wiped off the planet before they destroy everything.

This kind of attitude can be hard to roleplay without slipping into "Me hate human! Rarr!" melodrama. However, if the player tries to remember that the Red Talon is coming from a life as a wolf, not a human, that transition is easier. The Storyteller and player should keep the following in mind when playing Red Talons:

• Scent, sound, sight. In that order. Wolves instinctively hunt downwind of prey so that their scent does not carry. They can track prey for miles based on scent. They can detect a fingerprint by scent for weeks after it was laid. A Red Talon player should ask for scent from anything and anyone his character encounters. If an imposter shows up dressed as one of his packmates, the Red Talon will know immediately — unless, of course, he happens to be in Homid form (see below)

Sound is nearly as important. Dogs (and wolves) can differentiate between humans by the sound of their footsteps, and of course are capable of hearing sounds far beyond human range of hearing. Before a Storyteller even gets around to what the pack sees, she should have already described what they can smell and hear, if any of the pack are lupus.

• Homid form. There's a reason that lupus Garou don't like taking this form, and it has very little to do with "This not natural." Imagine that in order to hang out with your friends, you had to wear dark glasses that restricted your vision to what was two inches in front of you, wear earplugs that reduced every sound to muffled white noise, and wear a sock over your tongue so you couldn't taste anything. That's about what it's like for a Red Talon in Homid form, and that's why they avoid it when at all possible.

• Body language. Wolves have a language, but it isn't entirely verbal. It uses scent and body position more than sound, and Red Talons have trouble adjusting to the nuances of language. Until they learn how human language works, they focus more on the human's position and tone of voice. A human (or homid Garou) who yells encouragement at a lupus might find that the lupus drops its tail and looks hurt. This is because the lupus hears the yell, not the sentiment behind it. Likewise, if a human smiles, the lupus sees bared teeth, which is a sign of aggression. Do a little research on how wolves communicate and then watch the next person that you speak with face to face and see if you can figure out how a wolf would interpret the body language. If at any time you think the wolf would feel threatened, understand that a Red Talon might well attack at that moment.

• Dominance. Red Talons will not automatically challenge for leadership of a pack. They expect the strong wolf to lead, and that means that if they see another Garou as stronger, they'll follow. However, the beta position is just as important as the alpha in a wolf pack, as it's the beta that often keeps the others in line. A Red Talon beta might wrestle or even mount any other werewolf she sees as insubordinate to the pack alpha (usually not while they're in Homid form, but you never know). Needless to say, concepts such as "democracy" are confusing and scary to Red Talons.

• Lies. The wolf "language" mentioned above isn't suited to lying (as Malcolm mentions in Chapter Two). That means that the entire concept of deceit isn't one that most Red Talons understand — but they learn it in pretty short order once they start dealing with homid Garou. Red Talons have no sense of tact or secrecy. Their idea of keeping a secret is, "I'm not going to tell you that." (Older Red Talons, however, learn to conceal unpleasant truths fairly well, witness the Winter Packs.)

A Red Talon does not have to be a seething bundle of Rage every moment. But faced with humanity's sheer selfishness and blindness in the face of the state of their species, it's no wonder that they're bitter. Accept the Red Talons for the tragic figures that they are, and they can be the most satisfying of the tribes to play.

Chapter Four: Spirit

"Sometimes, you're nothing but meat."
— Tori Amos, "Blood Roses"

The Red Talons' numbers grow ever smaller with each passing year. In years past, a litter might produce two or even three Garou. Now, with the wolf population dying out and the Wyrm and Weaver growing ever more powerful, a year might only see the birth of half a dozen Talons.

But that half-dozen Red Talons are *still* Red Talons. Still true predators. Still true wolves. In this chapter you will find five ready-to-use templates for Red Talons characters, suitable for player-controlled characters or simply as inspiration. You will also find descriptions of some of the most famous (or infamous) Red Talons of all time.

Human's Friend

Quote: *Humans play, love, hunt, mate, and die. You can understand them if you try.*

Prelude: Your pack's hunting grounds got smaller by the day as humans cut down the trees and cleared away the brush. Your pack followed the prey as the herds moved, but you knew that the humans would follow as well.

You were right — in a way. The humans found your pack and did not harm them, but studied them and put strange boxes out. You were wary of these, but they remained for some time without any harm, and the pack began to sleep in them. And then one day, the humans sealed your pack — and you — up inside those boxes and took you away.

You were all afraid, and for you that fear led to the First Change. You broke out of your box to find yourself in another, much larger one that smelled like the machines that tore down trees. Cursing yourself for ever trusting the humans, you settled back into Lupus form to await this box opening. When it did, however, the humans freed your pack into a vast, new hunting ground with prey to hunt and clean water to drink. You have found no fences or human machines, and you had decided not to question good fortune when the Red Talons found you. Their stories of what humans do to wolves disturbed you greatly, because you know that humans don't *always* behave so shamefully.

Concept: You are not an alpha and don't really have the desire to be, but you are very vocal when a Red Talon (or any other Garou, for that matter) starts bad-mouthing humans too much. You have seen, first hand, how kind humans can be. While you understand that if the humans hadn't destroyed your first hunting ground, they would not have had to move you, at least they made that effort! You are very confused about how humans can move in such different ways as a species. However, you know that there's hope for them — which means there's hope for the Garou.

Roleplaying Hints: Watch any humans your pack encounters. Try to find out why some humans hate and despoil Gaia and some seem to revere Her. You picked up on human language pretty quickly, so use it. Ask strange questions of humans and homid Garou, like "Have you ever saved a wolf?" or "Do you love the Earth?" You'll probably come off as an especially aggressive tree-hugger — unless the human makes you suspect he's one of the "destroy the forest" types. If the human seems worthy, however, you'll go to great lengths to protect her. You would dearly love to find the humans who saved your pack and thank them for their kindness. You would also love to find the humans who drove you from your hunting grounds and "thank" them as well.

Equipment: Dedicated clothes, hat from one of the humans who saved your pack (you stole it while he was taking pictures).

Red Talons

Name: | Breed: Lupus | Pack Name:
Player: | Auspice: Ragabash | Pack Totem:
Chronicle: | Camp: Whelp's Compromise | Concept: Human's Friend

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●○○○	Charisma	●●●○○	Perception	●●●●○
Dexterity	●●●○○	Manipulation	●●●○○	Intelligence	●●○○○
Stamina	●●○○○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wits	●●●●○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Alertness	●●○○○	Animal Ken	●●●○○	Computer	○○○○○
Athletics	●●●○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	●●○○○
Brawl	●●○○○	Drive	○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Dodge	●●●○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Empathy	●○○○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Linguistics	●○○○○
Expression	●○○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	●○○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Occult	●○○○○
Primal-Urge	●●●○○	Performance	○○○○○	Politics	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Stealth	●●●○○	Rituals	●●○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Survival	●●●○○	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds		Gifts		Gifts
Ancestors	●●○○○	Hare's Leap		
Rites	●●○○○	Open Seal		
Totem	●●○○○	Cub's Lesson		
	○○○○○			
	○○○○○			

Renown: Glory ○○○○○○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□; Honor ●●○○○○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□; Wisdom ●○○○○○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□

Rank: 1

Rage: ●●○○○○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□

Gnosis: ●●●●●○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□

Willpower: ●●●●○○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□

Health: Bruised □; Hurt -1 □; Injured -1 □; Wounded -2 □; Mauled -2 □; Crippled -5 □; Incapacitated □

Tribal Weakness: CANNOT REGAIN GNOSIS IN CITIES

Provider for Gaia

Quote: *The land is hungry, and so am I. Let's start with the little one.*

Prelude: Born on the outskirts of a city, you and your meager pack foraged for food in human garbage. You ate what and when you could, avoided the humans, and lived your life. It wasn't much, but it was all you knew, even if something inside yearned for more.

And then one night, a pack of humans came for your pack with thunder and fire, and slew all of them except you. You ran, but then a bullet sheared one of your paws away. As the humans approached, you wished that you could have eaten that day. Another crack of thunder and bite of pain, and all thoughts of food were gone. You erupted into a whirlwind of blood and fury, and tore the humans to pieces. When your fury was spent, you remembered how hungry you were.

The Bone Gnawers found you first, although they considered inducting you into their tribe, the tiny remnant of pure breeding you retain sent you off to a Red Talon sept. Here was the world you had always longed for, even if you never knew it. The Talons heard of what happened during your First Change, and rather than reprimand you, your mentor showed you the powers of pain and blood to feed the land.

You understand being hungry all the time. If Gaia hungers, you intend to feed her.

Concept: You spent your young life running from humans and trying to feed yourself and your pack. While you revel in being strong enough to find food easily, you don't wish to keep it all to yourself. Gaia is hungry, many of your Kin are hungry, and a plentiful source of food is all around you. Other Garou may regard eating humans as taboo, but to you, it just makes sense. You haven't even been told that human flesh is often laden with chemicals, but it might not make any difference at this point — you're eating very well indeed now.

Roleplaying Hints: You understand that eating human flesh is a violation of the Litany and that other tribes would persecute you for it, but every now and then, you slip up and refer to how a human tastes or how easy they are to catch. When you do, you usually feign a miscommunication — you weren't talking about a human, but a deer (or some other prey animal). This usually works, and has the added bonus of making other Garou think you don't understand them.

RED TALONS

Name: | Breed: Lupus | Pack Name:
Player: | Auspice: Theurge | Pack Totem:
Chronicle: | Camp: Dying Cub | Concept: Provider for Gaia

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●●○○	Charisma	●●○○○	Perception	●●●●○
Dexterity	●●○○○	Manipulation	●●●○○	Intelligence	●●●○○
Stamina	●●●○○	Appearance	●○○○○	Wits	●●●○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Alertness	●●●○○	Animal Ken	●●○○○	Computer	○○○○○
Athletics	●○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	●●●○○
Brawl	●●●○○	Drive	○○○○○	Investigation	●○○○○
Dodge	●○○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Expression	○○○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	●○○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Occult	●●○○○
Primal-Urge	●●●○○	Performance	○○○○○	Politics	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Stealth	●●●○○	Rituals	●●●○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Survival	●●○○○	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds		Gifts	Gifts
Pure Breed	●○○○○	Sense Prey	
Rites	●●●●●	Sense Wyrm	
	○○○○○	Purify Meat	
	○○○○○	Hare's Leap	
	○○○○○		

Renown: Glory ○○○○○○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□; Honor ○○○○○○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□; Wisdom ●●●○○○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□; Rank 1

Rage: ●●●●○○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□
Gnosis: ●●●●●○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□
Willpower: ●●●●○○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□

Health: Bruised □; Hurt -1 □; Injured -1 □; Wounded -2 □; Mauled -2 □; Crippled -5 □; Incapacitated □

Tribal Weakness: CANNOT REGAIN GNOSIS IN CITIES

You don't hate humans in the same way as many Talons do. You understand that they need to be destroyed, but would prefer to corral them into herds somehow so they don't go to waste. After all, they've made such a mess of the land, they should have a hand in cleaning it up, even if it's just by donating their screams.

Equipment: You carry nothing, but have been known to splinter pieces of wood for use in your rites.

Spy

Quote: *One of the elders said a pack should go the city and investigate this matter. I volunteered us — that was all right, yes?*

Prelude: You were born in a Red Talon sept, and ran with the strongest wolves. You were fed well, and taught by your elders how to hunt and bring down prey from an early age. When your time to mate arrived, the First Change came upon you, and you knew why the older wolves had taken such an interest. They explained the human problem and the ultimate solution — a solution that you were to be part of.

You were supposed to be part of a Winter Pack, but then an opportunity to use your talents in another capacity arose. You were sent to a multi-tribal sept to join one of their packs and act as a spy. Well, not so much "spy" on the sept as "act in the interests of the Red Talons." In short, you are to try to get your pack as close to humans as possible, as often as possible, and kill as many as you can.

So far, you have managed to convince them that you are incapable of controlling your Rage, but this will only work for so long. You are considering goading the pack to frenzy around humans instead, so that you won't be immediately responsible, but you haven't hit on how to do that yet. And besides, that doesn't seem right to you, but the Talons told you that humans must die at all costs.

All costs?

Concept: Very much a product of propaganda, you whole-heartedly believe that humans are the source of all evil in the world and must die. Your packmates, for the time being, see you as an exceptionally vicious Red Talon, but expect you to grow more moderate as you mature. This isn't likely to happen unless something really shakes up your view of humanity, some glaring and obvious sign that the species has any worth. You do share information with your home sept when the opportunity presents itself, but that isn't really why you're here. You see yourself as a noble crusader, doing important work. If you're ever called to task for your deeds, you might run to seek asylum with your sept, or submit, depending on how your pack treats you.

Roleplaying Hints: You adopt other forms than Lupus more often than many Talons, largely because you can't lie in Lupus form. You hate having to lie to and manipulate your pack, but your loyalty is first and foremost to your tribe and your home sept. As you develop, however, and your bond with your pack deepens, these loyalties may change, which may lead to you questioning your entire purpose in life. The fact that, as a Philodox, you are expected to interpret the law and help guide the pack is especially nettling to you. Above all, though, you know that being a Winter Garou is great honor and you don't wish to sully it.

Equipment: None.

RED TALONS

Name: | Breed: Lupus | Pack Name:
Player: | Auspice: Philodox | Pack Totem:
Chronicle: | Camp: Winter Pack | Concept: Spy

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●●●○	Charisma	●●○○○	Perception	●●●○○
Dexterity	●●●○○	Manipulation	●●●○○	Intelligence	●●○○○
Stamina	●●●○○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wits	●●●○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Alertness	●●○○○	Animal Ken	●●○○○	Computer	○○○○○
Athletics	●●○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	●○○○○
Brawl	●●●○○	Drive	○○○○○	Investigation	●○○○○
Dodge	●●○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Linguistics	●○○○○
Expression	○○○○○	Leadership	●○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	●○○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Occult	●○○○○
Primal-Urge	●●●○○	Performance	●○○○○	Politics	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Stealth	●●●○○	Rituals	●●○○○
Subterfuge	●●○○○	Survival	●●○○○	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds		Gifts	Other Traits
Mentor	●○○○○	Beast Speech	4-pt. Merit: Winter Garou
Pure Breed	●●●○○	Resist Pain	
Rites	●○○○○	Hidden Killer	
	○○○○○		
	○○○○○		

Renown: Glory ○○○○○○○ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ Honor ○○○○○○ ☐☐☐☐☐ ○○○ ☐☐☐

Rage: ●●●○○○○○○○ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Gnosis: ●●●●●○○○○○ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Willpower: ●●●○○○○○○○ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Health: Bruised ☐; Hurt -1 ☐; Injured -1 ☐; Wounded -2 ☐; Mauled -2 ☐; Crippled -5 ☐; Incapacitated ☐

Tribal Weakness: CANNOT REGAIN GNOSIS IN CITIES

Autumn Wolf

Quote: *The best we can hope for is a beautiful dirge in our honor, but that is enough.*

Prelude: Born in a splendid forest, you remember hunting rabbits in the woods with your brothers and sisters as a pup. You remember watching leaves fall during your first autumn and the smell of the forest change as the air grew colder. You remember the hunger as snow covered the land and howling mournfully because you thought you'd never eat again, and then the joy as spring returned and the prey emerged to feed you.

But most of all, you remember the machines. They came as the leaves fell during your second autumn. You never actually saw them move, but you wandered from a copse of trees and saw what was left of the forest. It was bare as a meadow — worse, because meadows house mice and rabbits to eat. This housed nothing, just the burned stumps of trees and the bodies of any creature left in the way… and fallen leaves. And looking in horror over the shattered remains of your home, you howled in anguish. As the howl wound down, you found yourself screaming with a human throat.

The Red Talons eventually found you and told you about the war on the humans and the battle against the Wyrm and Weaver, but you aren't really interested. You just want to live in the forest again and hunt food with your brothers. But the forests need to be protected, and you know that job to be yours. You don't believe you can survive it, but you don't intend to die easily.

Concept: You know that the world is in autumn, and that means that much of it will die soon. The prophecies you've seen and heard all confirm this. However, you also hold out hope that after winter comes spring, and life will return to the world. You aren't sure whether that's going to happen, though, so you cling tenaciously to autumn and defend the wild places with every bit of energy you can muster. Perhaps you are a Guardian at a caern, or you might be considering journeying to the Amazon to defend the greatest of forests. Either way, you are at your best among other Garou rather than pretending to be human.

Roleplaying Hints: Your songs are sad and mournful, but you're still young, so sometimes you forget to be sad and romp with your packmates and Kinfolk. You like to try to out-howl other Galliards, not to show them up, but just for fun. Sometimes, though, you see a leaf fall and you tumble into despair that can last days. You are torn between believing that the world is ending and your fight is futile and hoping fervently for the spring that follows winter. You have not yet shared the prophecies you've seen with your packmates, even though they seem to involve your pack, because you don't wish your packmates to feel the crushing sadness you often do.

Equipment: None.

Red Talons

Name: | Breed: Lupus | Pack Name:
Player: | Auspice: Galliard | Pack Totem:
Chronicle: | Camp: Wardens of the Land | Concept: Autumn Wolf

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●●○○	Charisma	●●●●○	Perception	●●○○○
Dexterity	●●●●○	Manipulation	●●○○○	Intelligence	●●●○○
Stamina	●●●○○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wits	●●○○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Alertness	●●○○○	Animal Ken	●●○○○	Computer	○○○○○
Athletics	●●○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	●●○○○
Brawl	●●○○○	Drive	○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Dodge	●○○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Empathy	●○○○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Expression	●●●○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Occult	○○○○○
Primal-Urge	●●●○○	Performance: Howls	●●●●○	Politics	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Stealth	●●○○○	Rituals	●●●○○
Subterfuge	●○○○○	Survival	●●○○○	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

Background		Gifts		Gifts
Ancestors	●●○○○	Hare's Leap		
Kinfolk	●○○○○	Call of the Wyld		
Rites	●●●○○	Scent of Running Water		
	○○○○○			
	○○○○○			

Renown

Glory: ●●○○○○○○○○ / ○○○○○○○○○○
Honor: ○○○○○○○○○○ / ○○○○○○○○○○
Wisdom: ●○○○○○○○○○ / ○○○○○○○○○○

Rank: 1

Rage: ●●●●○○○○○○ / ○○○○○○○○○○

Gnosis: ●●●●●●○○○○ / ○○○○○○○○○○

Willpower: ●●●●○○○○○○ / ○○○○○○○○○○

Health

Bruised		☐
Hurt	-1	☐
Injured	-1	☐
Wounded	-2	☐
Mauled	-2	☐
Crippled	-5	☐
Incapacitated		☐

Tribal Weakness: CANNOT REGAIN GNOSIS IN CITIES

Disgrace

Quote: *I cannot act as alpha. I have already been proven unworthy.*

Prelude: Your First Change saw a great clamor among the Red Talons. A great prophecy had come to pass at your birth, and sure enough, you bear a striking resemblance to a great hero of old. You were rushed through your Rite of Passage, given leadership of a pack, and sent on an important mission to the Umbra — you were meant to destroy a festering Hellhole using your inherited skill and leadership ability. Your sept was sure you would complete the mission easily, and return to triumphant howls.

You were not ready for such a mission. A pack of Black Spiral Dancers was lying in wait for you, which you should have anticipated. You failed in your task. Your packmates died in agony or were forced to walk the Black Spiral. You escaped through sheer luck, and returned to your sept with your tail between your legs and your head hung low.

The elders of your sept decided that the prophecy had either been a mistake or that you were not the true embodiment of it. They further decided that you were a failure as a Red Talon. While they didn't expel you from the tribe, they sent you away to a sept that needed warriors. Now you have a new pack, and your pure breeding and noble bearing — not to mention your brief, if disastrous experience in the Umbra, drives the others to look to you for leadership. But you cannot lead, not again. You will not lead another pack into death and corruption.

Concept: You are a born leader and alpha, but you have no confidence in yourself. You can exert dominance easily if you so choose, but you are deathly afraid that if you take up the mantle of alpha that another pack will lie dead at your feet. You have nightmares of the survivors of your first pack coming to find you to exact revenge (or drag you into the pits) but you cannot bring yourself to tell your pack the whole truth behind your arrival.

Roleplaying Hints: Outside of battle, you avoid your pack. You don't wish to get attached to them, just in case. While on a mission, however, you defend each of them like family. Homid, metis, Child of Gaia, Glass Walker — no matter tribe, auspice or breed, they are your pack and you will not let them die. If asked your opinion, you defer to the alpha or decline to answer, but sometimes, instinct takes over and you bark an order or suggest a course of action. Then you remember howls of pain and evil laughter and are quiet again. Somewhere, in the back of your mind, you wonder what exactly the prophecy that you supposedly embody actually said....

Equipment: None.

Red Talons

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Breed: Lupus
Auspice: Ahroun
Camp:

Pack Name:
Pack Totem:
Concept: Disgrace

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●●●○	Charisma	●●●○○	Perception	●●○○○
Dexterity	●●●○○	Manipulation	●●○○○	Intelligence	●●○○○
Stamina	●●●●○	Appearance	●●●○○	Wits	●●○○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Alertness	●●○○○	Animal Ken	●○○○○	Computer	○○○○○
Athletics	●●●○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	●○○○○
Brawl	●●●○○	Drive	○○○○○	Investigation	●●○○○
Dodge	●○○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Empathy	●○○○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Expression	●●○○○	Leadership	●●●○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	●●○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Occult	●○○○○
Primal-Urge	●●●○○	Performance	○○○○○	Politics	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Stealth	●●○○○	Rituals	●○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Survival	●●●○○	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds		Gifts	Gifts
Ancestors	●○○○○	Hare's Leap	
Pure Breed	●●●●○	Inspiration	
Totem	●●●○○	Eye of the Hunter	
	○○○○○		
	○○○○○		

Renown

Glory ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Honor ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Wisdom ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Rank 1

Rage ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Gnosis ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Willpower ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Health

Bruised		☐
Hurt	-1	☐
Injured	-1	☐
Wounded	-2	☐
Mauled	-2	☐
Crippled	-5	☐
Incapacitated		☐

Tribal Weakness

CANNOT REGAIN GNOSIS IN CITIES

Notable Red Talons

Over the course of years, many tribes have forgotten many of their dead, focusing on the greatest warriors or the worst offenders. But Red Talons don't reckon time the same way as other tribes, and their heroes live on. A Red Talon moot might feature a story about a famous warrior, and then, to equal approval, hear the tale of a minor Ragabash who once helped his sept fend off an attack by playing a trick on the Black Spiral Dancer leader.

The Talons listed below are just a few of the Garou that have done their tribe proud — or have brought them great shame.

Stains-Glass

Some time ago, the humans found a source of great power and faith in the persona of a dead carpenter. This faith grew over time from a small and persecuted cult into the most powerful tribe of humans in the world. The other tribes of Garou each dealt with this faith in their own way. Some Garou followed it. Some abhorred it, some worked to destroy it. But the Red Talons howl of Stains-Glass, the only Talon clever enough to *use* it.

Stains-Glass was a Ragabash, of course, and a member of the Night-Fear (the forerunners of the Warders of the Land). She belonged to a very small sept centered around a caern of Calm. The lands fell under the domain of a nobleman that had forbidden his subjects ever to venture into the deep woods. Stains-Glass heard rumors that the noble's family had once included Kinfolk among the Children of Gaia or the Warders, but neither she nor the other Garou at the sept cared much. The humans stayed well clear of the bawn, and all was well.

And then one winter, the nobleman died and, as he had no son, left all of his goods and lands to the Church. The land's new "owners" quickly built a small chapel and established a trade route with other villages, but soon decided that cutting a road through the deep woods was the best way to expand their influence. The elder of the sept advised killing all humans in the immediate area, but Stains-Glass (then known by another name, long since forgotten) did not relish the idea of slaying the humans that had heretofore done them no harm. Instead, she assumed human form that night and ventured to the village, stole a length of cloth hanging near a home, and then pierced her palms with a sharp piece of wood. She staggered throughout the village, wailing like a ghost, and pointed to the chapel, exclaiming that the Church had stolen the land from the beloved noble and that evil lay therein. As the townsfolk followed, she walked to the church and staggered against the windows, staining the glass with her own blood. She then vanished into the Umbra, leaving only the bloodied sheet.

The townsfolk, believing they had witnessed a miracle, forced the Church's people from their lands. They continued trading with other villages, but never ventured into the deep woods. They tore down the chapel, but erected a small shrine, wherein they kept the bloodied sheet of the Angel from the Forest.

Wyrmbaiter

Regarded as a hero and conqueror by some and a dupe and villain by others, Wyrmbaiter was the Red Talon Ahroun credited with beginning (and ultimately winning) the War of Tears. The stories go that he was a massive wolf, nearly the size of a pony even in Lupus form. He came to Australia for reasons unclear — some versions of the story state that he had destroyed all of the Wyrm-creatures within miles of his home sept in Europe. Other legends state that he, like many of the other colonists who came to Australia, was in exile for crimes ranging from slaying a Silver Fang emissary in a blind rage to violating the first tenet of the Litany with his sister, Greyflank. What is known to be true is that Greyflank, also a Red

Talon, accompanied him to Australia, and that the two of them assumed command of the Red Talons in the new country.

The decision to begin breeding with dingoes might very well have been Wyrmbaiter's, but no one is sure on that point. All Galliards agree on at least one fact, however: he hated the Bunyip. The native Garou were, to him, not Garou at all, but some blasphemous mockery of all that werewolves should be. As he often asked any Garou that spoke in defense of the Bunyip, "What is a Garou that doesn't howl?"

Wyrmbaiter ran with a huge pack of Red Talons for years, but did not make open war on the Bunyip for fear of reprisal by other tribes. When Greyflank was murdered, found headless near Bunyip lands with the scent and tracks of the thylacines surrounding her, Wyrmbaiter had all the justification he needed to call a hunt.

He gathered the Garou of Australia and demanded blood. Why exactly the other tribes went along with his demands is a point of contention in modern days: some say that the Silver Fangs believed that Wyrmbaiter would be sated with only a few Bunyip, that he would never be able to wipe them out. Some believe that the Uktena went along with the war because the Bunyip kept secrets from them. The Children of Gaia and the Glass Walkers abstained from the war, and in some cases even tried to save the native Garou, but to no avail. In the 1930s, Wyrmbaiter led the War of Tears and murdered every single Bunyip in the world.

He himself tracked the last surviving Bunyip to a cave and slew him. It was then that Mara the Scream, an elder Black Spiral Dancer, revealed herself and gave Wyrmbaiter his sister's head — it was the Black Spirals, not the Bunyip, who had slain her. Wyrmbaiter would have proven a most effective warrior against the Black Spiral Dancers, she said, had he directed his rage at them. Fortunately, he had found other victims.

Wyrmbaiter allegedly fled back to his people and told them the truth, and then retreated to the caves and the dark places beneath the mountains. He was never seen again. No Red Talon reports contacting him as an Ancestor, and his body was never found.

Wyrmbaiter sired at least two litters of pups before disappearing, however, and perhaps others. Red Talon prophecy speaks of "the last son of Wyrmbaiter" howling down the heavens in rage at being rejected by the Garou. Australian Garou note that Rage-in-the-Streets has supplanted Mamu as the Red Talon leader, but that Mamu — himself an immense dingo, nearly the size of a pony — is not dead.

Akosha's Eye

In 1999, the fury of Hell came to Bangladesh. The Red Talon's Rite of Prophecy revealed clues as to what may have happened, but as is often the case, the wolf tribe has not correctly interpreted those visions. Instead, Red Talons in the Americas and Europe tells stories of monstrous dragons battling ancient demons called up from their slumber by the shrieking of cranes. The stories get more convoluted the further one gets from the site of the disaster. In fact, the tribe is certain of only two facts regarding Bangladesh. First, the spirit worlds are still in turbulence there. Second, from the crucible of that "Week of Nightmares" came a true hero, Akosha's Eye.

A Theurge newly reached the rank of Adren when the storms began, she immediately realized that while the storm might well thin the human population, the toll such suffering would take on the Umbra would be devastating. Herself something of a prophetess, she petitioned her sept's leaders for the aid of a pack to accompany her to the site of the storm and attempt to stem any damage being done to the Umbra. They refused, saying that entering such a storm would be folly. Akosha's Eye had to concede that point, but still firmly believe that if she did not act, the consequences would be far worse. She set off alone.

Along the way, she found other Garou who were just as concerned about the terrible storm. She also met emissaries from the Beast Courts, who demanded to know her business. "Service to Gaia," was her only reply, and even the enigmatic *hengeyokai* found themselves drawn to this quiet werewolf. Together with the makeshift pack she'd assembled, she made her way to the storm.

She never reached the epicenter of the tempest (which, of course, is why she survived), but discovered creatures on both sides of the Gauntlet feeding from the pain and suffering caused by the storm and riding the winds to spread to other locales. She called down every spirit ally she could. She directed the Fera with tactical genius called down from her Ancestors. She fought with the power and bravery of a Garou fighting a battle not for vengeance or even righteous retribution, but to protect Gaia.

Although horribly wounded, Akosha's Eye triumphed. She and her allies kept the worst of the creatures confined to the storm-winds, and when reinforcements finally arrived, she collapsed, reasoning that her work was done. In that moment, however, she felt a presence telling her that her destiny was not to fall in battle, but to die a revered teacher. Somehow, bloodied and broken, she dragged herself to safety and eventually back to her sept.

Now a member of the sept's leadership, she specializes in training young Garou in battle. Not slaughtering helpless humans, not giving their lives to right the wrongs of the past, but battle for the Mother. She can think of no better legacy.

Storm-Eye

The wolf that would in later years become known as Storm-Eye was born in spring of 1991 to a strong pack of wolves. From her early years, she and her brother were inseparable. Her brother, who would later become alpha of the pack, became known as Fights-the-Bear when he drove a bear away from the pack at only one year of age. Another year passed, and Storm-Eye underwent her First Change and went to the Sky-Pines Sept for her Rite of Passage, where she gained the name Judge-of-the-Trees. She joined with a pack of young Garou called the Summer's Sun pack, and together they defended Sky-Pines from incursions both Wyrmish and human (one such battle is described on page 196 of **Werewolf**).

Tragedy struck when one of her pack renounced Gaia to join forces with the Wyrm, and later she lost the rest of her pack battling this traitor. Mephi Faster-Than-Death saved her life, and later joined her in tracking down the abjured werewolf. After that battle,

she gained the name Storm-Eye Two-World-Daughter (having lost her eye during the fight, which took place in a raging blizzard). Even after this victory, however, Storm-Eye was overcome by Harano and ventured back to the hunting grounds of her birth to rejoin Fights-the-Bear's pack.

Her greatest moment of shame, however, came when she forced Fights-the-Bear to kill humans.

Her brother knew he had reached his last season. He planned to wander off into the woods and die quietly, as most wolves do. Storm-Eye, however, decided that he should die a warrior's death, and forced him to attack a group of human hunters. He killed one of the humans before being shot and slain himself. Satisfied that her brother would be well-remembered, Storm-Eye returned to her Kinfolk.

When she told them what had happened, they refused to howl for Fights-the-Bear, as he had acted against his nature by attacking humans. Confused and hurt, Storm-Eye fled to a sept of Red Talons, and told them what she had done. They mocked her, sardonically calling her "Storm-Eye Wiser-than-Gaia," and she fled again.

She continued running, traveling the world over and fighting in Eastern Europe with Black Furies and Shadow Lords both, but never outran the stigma of what she had done. Finally, she found herself at a Get of Fenris sept while it came under attack by forces of the Wyrm and the leader of the sept ordered her to flee with a young Child of Gaia metis called Cries Havoc and the Glass Walker Julia Spencer. During the battle, Storm-Eye battled a strange Bane, a shadowy wolf that filled her with inexplicable terror. The battle ended with the three werewolves escaping first to England, and then flying to New York.

Joined by the Wendigo Ahroun John North-Wind's-Son and the Bone Gnawer Big Sis, the motley pack journeyed into upstate New York and met with the Stargazer Antoine Teardrop. There, the shadow-wolf attacked again, and there Storm-Eye recognized him for what he was: her brother, Fights-the-Bear, twisted by the death she had forced on him into a savage creature of the Wyrm.

While the other Garou fought other minions of the Wyrm accompanying the shadow-wolf, Storm-Eye came face-to-face with what she hated and feared, and managed to conquer her weaknesses and win the fight. She led the pack for a time, but eventually discovered that she enjoyed traveling from sept to sept as an arbitrator for her tribe. She might arrive at any Talon caern at any time, ready to lend an objective ear to any problems the sept faces.

Breed: Lupus

Auspice: Philodox

Tribe: Red Talons

Nature/Demeanor: Alpha/Alpha

Physical: Strength 2 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 3 (5/6/6/5)

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2 (1/0/0/0), Appearance 2 (1/0/0/0)

Mental: Perception 3*, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Intimidation 2, Primal-Urge 4

Skills: Leadership 3, Stealth 4, Survival 4

Knowledges: Enigmas 2, Linguistics 1 (English), Rituals 3

Backgrounds: Ancestors 3, Pure Breed 3

Gifts: (1) Beast Speech, Hare's Leap, Heightened Senses, Resist Pain, Scent of the True Form (2) Primal Howl, Sense the Unnatural, Sense of the Prey (3) Trackless Waste, Wisdom of the Ancient Ways

*Increase all difficulties associated with depth perception and judging distance by 2 due to her missing eye.

Rank: 3 (Adren)

Rage 5, Gnosis 6, Willpower 6

Rites: (Accord) Accomplishment; (Caern) Opened Caern; (Mystic) Cleansing, Questing Stone; (Punishment) Stone of Scorn; Plus any others the Storyteller thinks appropriate.

Fetishes: Gun Barrel Fetish (Level 2, Gnosis 7): Storm-Eye wears the barrel of a rifle she took from a slain hunter wound around her wrist. It is infused with a moose-spirit, and acts as a Might Fetish (see Chapter Three).

Image: In her natural Lupus form, Storm-Eye is a large gray wolf with patches of red fur on her tail and paws. In Homid form, which she avoids if at all possible, she is a young, intense-looking woman, dressed in whatever her packmates could provide that day. She is missing her left eye, although she has recently gotten into the habit of wearing an eye patch while in Homid form.

Roleplaying Notes: You've lost a great deal in your life — your brother, your first pack, much of your Renown, and many of your illusions. But what you saw in New York changed a great deal. You've learned the importance of the pack and gotten a glimpse of exactly how much time the Garou have left, which is to say, not much. However, the ancient ways are still important, and enforcing them — and the difference between Garou and their Kinfolk — is your chosen task. Sometimes, you wonder if you aren't still running....

Strongest Son

The Red Talons' agreement with the Mokolé of southern Africa, that the tribe could stay and aid the werecrocodiles in protecting the land if they could breed with the native Cape hunting dogs, has worked out very well for all involved. All African Red Talons — the Kucha Ekundu — remember the name of Looks-to-the-Sun, the Philodox who pioneered that agreement. He is long dead, of course, but his lineage remains strong among the Kucha Ekundu. In fact, the current leader of the Caern of the Bloodied Rock is a descendant of Looks-to-the-Sun, with an interesting story of his own.

Born under the hot African sun in as his Kucha Ekundu mother listened fearfully to the shots of poachers not a quarter mile away, the pup that would become Strongest Son learned about family early on. His mother did not kill the poachers, as she knew that an area that gains a reputation for housing dangerous animals merely attracts more hunters. Instead, she worked during Strongest Son's childhood to help other animals in the area hide from poachers, and finally they assumed the area was dead and stopped hunting there for at time. Several months after his First Change, however, they returned.

The poachers had stopped hunting elephant and lion near the Caern of the Bloodied Rock, but the river not far away still housed crocodiles, and the poachers hunted them for their skins. Strongest Son, then known as Lion-Howl for his odd, rough manner of howling, knew that the river was home to a mighty Mokolé warrior who had no patience for humans (especially hunters). He waited on the bank of the river until he saw this Mokolé and, as the poachers loaded their weapons not far down the bank, asked him to leave the humans in peace but to make sure the crocodiles in the river were safe. The Mokolé argued, saying they would return if not killed, but Lion-Howl retorted that they would never return if the hunting was poor. The Mokolé said they deserved to die, and Lion-Howl answered that they would someday; surely it didn't need to be today. Finally, the Mokolé growled in rage, and Lion-Howl, afraid for the safety of the crocodiles and for other Fera in Africa, reminded the Mokolé of the agreement between his ancestor and the werecrocodiles.

At that, the Mokolé had no response, and as the poachers made their way down the river, bade his reptilian brethren submerge and not resurface until the danger had passed. When the hunters left, disgusted, Lion-Howl thanked the Mokolé for honoring the pact. The werecrocodile responded, "No, I thank you, the strongest child of Looks-to-the-Sun, for reminding me of the lesson he brought — that the mistakes of the past need not cost us the future." From that moment on, Lion-Howl was called Strongest Son.

He still lives, and now leads the sept at the Caern of the Bloodied Rock. He allows Fera of any breed to visit the caern, as well as Garou from other lands, provided they bring no taint with them. Perhaps he is so tolerant because, as a Galliard, he loves sharing stories with visitors. Perhaps it is because he recognizes the good that diversity has done for the Fera of his land. Or perhaps it is because he appreciates the gravity of taking life well enough to understand the value of restraint.

The Sept of the First Rage

The following is a description of a Red Talon sept in British Columbia, suitable as an origin for Red Talon characters, a destination for player-controlled packs, or simply inspiration for the Storyteller.

History

The Unnamed Wolf Caern, at the heart of the sept, was supposedly created by Fells-Trees himself (see Chapter One), the ancient Red Talon also credited with inadvertently inventing the Garou glyph language. The legends among the Talons state that after the moot that finalized the Litany Fells-Trees lost faith in the other Garou. He saw them as well-meaning, but deluded by the Wyrm and by the humans, and so he communed with Gaia Herself and asked for help. She granted him the knowledge of creation, but cautioned him that using it carelessly would end him. He thanked Her, and told his cubs (one of whom, Spring Stream, also figures prominently into Talon legendry) that what he learned would save the tribe some time in the future. He then wandered off to die.

According to the tales, Fells-Trees wandered the spirit worlds looking for a place to lie down and free his spirit, but something pressed him to keep wandering. He eventually found a mountain that the humans had completely conquered. Their waste covered one slope, while the bodies of their dead covered another. The humans swarmed over the mountain, too stupid to clean themselves and too weak to do anything but breed.

Incensed, Fells-Trees used the knowledge Gaia had given him and cleansed the mountain of humans entirely, so much so that it became a caern through his will. He chose the newly purified caern as the place he

would die, but knew that someday his tribe would find his secret. And now, in the Last Days, they have.

The Lost Caern

The caern itself lay untouched for many years. Red Talon legend says that all three of the Pure Tribes guarded the mountain at one time or another, but that none of them ever ventured far enough up the mountain to find the caern. During the Wyrmcoming, a pack of Red Talons, driven north by encroaching humans and European Garou, discovered the mountain and reasoned that if the climb was arduous for them, it would be doubly so for the weak homids and their human Kin. The Red Talons gathered their spirits and climbed the mountain. When the reached the higher slopes, they discovered that game was plentiful, but difficult to catch — years of living in the rugged terrain had made even the prey animals hardy and strong. The Talons rose to the challenge, and made the mountain their hunting grounds. And still the caern remained hidden.

Finally, one fall as the leaves began to die and the ground began to freeze, a young Ragabash called Runs-in-Rain chased a hare into the brush and fell into a depression in the mountainside. Recovering his footing, he felt the power of the caern and was overcome with the spirit of Fells-Trees. Fells-Trees graced him with a vision, later called the Prophecy of Gaia's Rebirth. It stated that a great leader would arise from the mountain and recover the secret of creation. Runs-in-Rain immediately summoned his fellow werewolves and they set about restoring the caern's spirit and power.

Sunrise-Heart

Over the ensuing centuries, the land around the mountain has been settled, but the mountain itself (now called Mount Gibb after an explorer who led an ill-fated expedition up the mountain in the 19th century) remains mostly untouched by humanity. In the late 1980s, a Galliard was born in the sept that the others recognized as a truly Pure Bred Talon. Even before his First Change, this young cub ran with Garou rather than wolves and exhibited the bearing of a true alpha. When he experienced his First Change at sunrise one summer morning, the others knew him to be the prophesied leader and called him Sunrise-Heart.

Sunrise-Heart rose in rank more quickly than any werewolf in the history of the sept, and led his pack, Wolf's Chosen, against the Weaver, the Wyrm, and any other enemy that dared sully the caern. When he reached the rank of elder (a mere ten years after his First Change!) the sept expected him to take on the mantle of leader, but he refused and disappeared on an Umbral Quest. In the spiritual chaos that followed, the sept feared the worst. And then, a few months ago, he returned triumphant.

The tale of his quest — surely worthy of the Silver Record — explains how he found the secret of creation in the Red Talon Tribal Homelands after questing in Pangaea, the Legendary Realm, and even Wolfhome. He is, at present, the only Garou on earth that knows the Rite of Gaia's Rebirth (see Chapter Three). The rite has only been used once, to purify the one and only incursion humanity had made into the sept (a Pentex-funded logging operation blazed a trail into the forest and was scouting for a good locale to set up shop. They never got the chance). Sunrise-Heart has taken up leadership of the sept, and is considering how best to use his incredible knowledge.

Geography

Mount Gibb stands nearly 2500 feet above sea level. The bawn of the caern surrounds the entire mountain, but stops short of the road leading to Devine, the nearest town (population of approximately 5000). The mountain supports two packs of wolves, all Kinfolk to the Red Talons, as well as deer, mountain goats, and several other forms of prey.

Areas of particular interest are noted below.

Caern: Beneath an outcropping on Mount Gibb, just over 100 miles north of Vancouver, British Columbia

Type: Willpower

Level: 4

Gauntlet: 5

Totem: Eagle, although Wolf of the Woods makes infrequent appearances

Tribal Structure: Red Talons (closed to others normally, but see Sunrise-Heart's write-up, below)

Leader: Sunrise-Heart

The Heart of the Caern

Located on the east face of the mountain, close to the top but under a rock outcropping (making assault from above nearly impossible) is the heart of the caern. The caern's totem, Eagle, nests inside the cave but flies by day, observing his domain and hunting the Umbra. Normal eagles also nest on the mountain, and the murder of an eagle is one of the few reasons for denizens to venture into human civilization.

The caern's pathstone is also located here, meaning any moon bridges into the caern open in a small space. The caern is therefore virtually immune to attack moon-bridges, as any war party foolish enough

to attempt one could be easily bottled inside the cave and slain, or thrown from the mountain.

Graves of Hallowed Heroes

Red Talons who die of natural causes wander to the north face of the mountain, which is harsh and rocky, and climb as high as they can before falling or collapsing from weariness. That section of the mountain is considered the gravesite for the heroes of the sept, and any member of the sept who dies elsewhere is carried to the top of the mountain and thrown down the north face (if circumstances allow it). As the mountain becomes rockier around the edges of the north face, an observer could find glyphs carved into the stone representative of the fallen Talons. Northerly winds seem to shrill their true "howl names" during moots. When the Gathering for the Departed is performed for a sept member, the Garou climb as far on the north face as they safely can and the mountain rings with their howls.

The Glyph-Circle

Visitors to the sept are often shocked when they see the Glyph-Circle, but to the Talons of the Sept of the First Rage, it is a very important and absolutely sacred place. It is a circle of thirteen massive trees, each one inscribed with the glyph of one of the planetary Incarna (see **Rage Across the Heavens** for more detail). The Master of the Rite at the sept is expected to learn a rite exulting each of these Incarna, although she is not required to perform each often — commonly, a Garou at the sept shows an inclination for one of the Incarna and is allowed to perform that spirit's rite. For example, Silent, the mute Galliard, has performed Ruatma's ritual for the last two winters.

The caern's heart may be defensible, but the Glyph-Circle is not particularly safe from incursion. However, it is nearly as important to the Sept of the First Rage as the heart and they defend it viciously. Not long ago, a group of Banes swarmed into the Glyph-Circle during a rite to Tambiyah, disrupting it. The Talons had to scramble to make amends to the Incarna of Venus, and the sept is still feeling the effects. Worse, even Sunrise-Heart has no idea where the Banes came from or why they attacked the Glyph-Circle.

Assembly Area

During moots, the Garou normally assemble on the highest slopes. This means that the Guardians stay on the lower slopes of the mountain so as to guard it and protect their sept and Kinfolk while the rest of the Garou meet. The Guardians hold their own moots on half-moons in the foothills of the mountains, usually led by the Caller of the Wyld.

Sept Positions

The reader might notice that we have only named and detailed a very few of the Garou at the Sept of the First Rage. That is not an oversight.

The Storyteller should feel free to design her own characters to serve as Guardians and any of the minor sept positions, including Caller of the Wyld, Wyrm Foe, and Truthcatcher. These could be mentors or allies to player characters, or the player characters might take up those positions themselves. If the Storyteller wishes to emphasize the dwindling numbers of Red Talons in the world, perhaps those positions go unfilled and the caern's defenses are stretched thin. We could make up as many Red Talon characters as necessary to staff (and over-staff) the sept, but characters that we create won't mean nearly as much to your story as those that you and your troupe make. You therefore have White Wolf's permission to add to (or even subtract from) the caern's membership as you see fit. Have fun!

Moots at the Sept of the First Rage always begin with a retelling of history, from the creation of the world and all life straight through to present times (one such account is detailed in Chapter One of this book, in fact). The history changes each time based on who is in attendance and which Red Talons choose to howl loudest. Individual Garou often insert their own interpretations and opinions, and fights sometimes break out over such things. As the Last Days become steadily more frightening, these fights have become more common until Sunrise-Heart recently appointed a young Galliard named Born-in-Thunder the task of breaking up such arguments. The Fostern takes to his position of "Peacekeeper" with great enthusiasm.

The Lower Slopes

Mount Gibb is a difficult climb for humans (and for most animals), but the foothills around the mountain make for good hiking. The sept's previous leader realized that killing every human who sets foot on the mountain would bring about swift retribution, and declared that no humans should be bothered on the lower slopes of the mountain. Sunrise-Heart, who chafed under this ruling as a young Garou, changed it somewhat — humans are not to be *killed* on the lower slopes. Trees might fall on them, a herd of deer might trample them, or they might become afflicted with a terrible fear of the woods, but they aren't to be killed. And even then, a human who litters or otherwise offends the Talons (and urinating on trees, which the

Garou see as a contest to their territory, is a good way to do that) might be seized and dragged further into the bawn, where he can be dispatched without difficulty.

Life in the Sept

For the last several years, the Sept of the First Rage has labored simply to remain undiscovered and unmolested. They communicated with other septs, and their warriors would sometimes strike out and join with multi-tribal packs, but the sept did little to distinguish itself (other than staying hidden and never having to repel a serious invasion, which is in itself a feat). When Sunrise-Heart returned with the Rite of Gaia's Rebirth, the sept's Garou underwent a change of attitude.

The werewolves of the sept are cocky and jubilant. They know that, given the proper preparation, they could level the nearby town of Devine — for a start. They could teach the rite to Red Talons all over the world and watch cities fall. They could strike at the very heart of the Weaver. The Guardians of the caern are beginning to patrol even the lower slopes with bloodthirsty vigor. If they make a mistake, it's correctable, after all.

This recklessness endangers the sept, especially now. The mountain already has a bad reputation with the locals, and word of the Bane attack has made Garou of other septs nervous that the Talons are hiding something important. In fact, the Garou Nation has decided that the Sept of First Rage bears investigation. The Unlidded Eye, a Shadow Lord Judge of Doom who is often asked to look into such things, has his hands full in the Middle East, but plans to send an envoy to the sept soon. He really doesn't expect anything significant is going on, and may well send young, inexperienced Garou into this potential powder keg.

Garou of the Sept

The sept leader, Sunrise-Heart, is detailed below. Some of the other notable werewolves of the Sept of the First Rage are:

• Fire-Friend, caern Warder: Notable for his forays into the larger cities in Canada to fight Leeches in his younger days, Fire-Friend is an Ahroun with a mischievous streak that has not faded as he has aged. He often stalks the Guardians of the sept, pouncing on them from the trees to test their instincts.

• Born-in-Thunder, Peacekeeper: A Russian-born Talon, this Galliard was given the task of Peacekeeper chiefly because his ear-splitting howls can silence any werewolf in the sept.

• Black-Paws, Master of the Rite: Sunrise-Heart insists on performing many of the caern's rites, so Black-Paws' most common task is instructing young Garou. This is just as well — he is a prime example of the old adage, "Those who can't do, teach."

• Last-to-Eat, Master of the Challenge: A native of the sept, Last-to-Eat is probably the oldest living wolf (or werewolf) on the mountain. He has never ventured more than a few hours' run from the bawn, and is in fact terrified of technology and humans. He is a Theurge and carries several prophecies, most of which remain unshared.

Sunrise-Heart

Position: Sept Leader
Breed: Lupus
Auspice: Galliard
Tribe: Red Talon
Nature/Demeanor: Builder/Alpha
Physical: Strength 3 (5/7/6/4), Dexterity 4 (4/5/6/6), Stamina 5 (7/8/8/7)
Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3 (2/0/0/0), Appearance 2 (1/0/0/0)
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3
Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Expression 4, Primal-Urge 5
Skills: Animal Ken 4, Etiquette 2, Leadership 5, Melee 2, Performance 3, Stealth 4, Survival 4
Knowledges: Enigmas 4, Garou Astrology 5, Linguistics 1 (French and smattering of English, though he rarely uses either), Occult 2, Rituals 5
Backgrounds: Ancestors 4, Pure Breed 5
Gifts: (1) Beast Speech, Call of the Wyld, Eye of the Hunter, Hare's Leap, Heightened Senses, Howl to a Friend, Mindspeak, Wolf at the Door; (2) Offering of the Slain, Primal Howl, Predator's Leap, Scent of Sight; (3) Catfeet, Howl of Hunger, Trackless Waste; (4) Beast Life, Howl of Death, Shadows by the Firelight; (5) Blessing of the First Pack, Shattering Howl; (6) Home in All Lands
Rank: 6 (Elder)
Rage 6, Gnosis 8, Willpower 9
Rites: Sunrise-Heart knows all of the rites listed in **Werewolf: The Apocalypse** and the **Werewolf Players Guide**. In addition, he knows the rites listed in this book, except for the Rite of Feeding the Land.
Fetishes: None.

Image: In Homid form, Sunrise-Heart looks vaguely Native American, but has profuse red body hair and a stooped walk. In Lupus form, he is a beautiful red wolf with a perpetually pensive air about him.

Roleplaying Notes: You are in possession of one of the greatest assets the Garou ever knew. Now if you only knew what to do with it. You know you are a great

alpha, and a good leader, but this kind of responsibility doesn't seem to sit well on your shoulders. You are troubled and restless much of the time, and are secretly searching for a worthy student to learn the rite. You are adamant that it won't be taught to a homid werewolf, but a lupus of another tribe might be possible. The Children of Gaia are usually responsible. The Silver Fangs are the leaders, but the Shadow Lords are good at keeping secrets. You just don't know....

History: See above.

Story Ideas

Most stories involving the Sept of the First Rage will involve the Rite of Gaia's Rebirth or the recent Bane attack. Below are some suggestions.

• Sunrise-Heart opens the sept to Garou of any tribe or breed. He does this under a mask of "unity between the tribes," but actually wants to find a suitable student for the Rite of Gaia's Rebirth. The other Garou of the sept will be upset to have so many Garou in their territory, especially if they are homid or metis, and will likely work to make the visitor's lives unpleasant.

• The sept is invaded by a horde of Black Spiral Dancers, intent on killing Sunrise-Heart and defiling the caern. Sunrise-Heart called on his Home in All Lands Gift to alert another sept and call for help. Even if the initial raid is staved off, the sept will need aid in maintaining their home and tracking the invaders back to their source.

• Malcolm Night-Smile, the Shadow Lord Galliard who has made it his mission to learn about the Red Talons (and who narrates Chapter Two of this book) approaches the troupe's pack for help in getting a meeting with Sunrise-Heart (this may require a set-up story to establish the characters as being able to get near the elder). Although Malcolm has nothing but good intentions, he isn't called "Malcolm the Liar" for nothing, and will tell the characters anything he has to in order to gain their cooperation.

• After a swarm of Banes attacks the characters' own sept during a moot, a Red Talon ally (or any Garou with connections among the werewolves of Canada) mentions that something similar happened at the Sept of the First Rage. The pack is asked to travel there and investigate any similarities between the Banes that attacked the sept and the Banes that attacked the pack's home sept. Sunrise-Heart is interested but often busy, and the other Garou at the sept might be standoffish, especially if the pack is largely homid or spends too much time nosing around the Glyph-Circle.

Author's Dedications...

First and foremost, to my wife, Heather, for being patient with me when I get up at odd hours to write. Inspiration doesn't seem to strike at convenient times, does it?

Second, to my friends and fellow players. I do this because I love roleplaying. I love roleplaying because of you. I want to include a special note to Julie Blayne, who had the guts to play a Red Talon as her very first **Werewolf** character, and in so doing got me to love the tribe again.

Finally, to all of you folks reading this book. Somebody out there must buy these, because they keep hiring me.

...And Some Closing Thoughts

The Red Talons hate humans for what they've done to the planet. Not all humans despoil the environment without a care, but the Talons still hate the species. In our terminology, that's called "bigotry" or "prejudice."

The Red Talons *know* that they're right. They've heard it from Gaia Herself. They might have to kill, maim, and do terrible things entirely against their wolfish nature to get the job done, but that's OK, because they're right. In our parlance, that's called "zealotry" or "fanaticism."

The Red Talons bear no small resemblance to the zealots and violent activists in the human world. What they do "in service to Gaia" or "to protect themselves" is, in some ways, little different than what the Crusaders of yore did in the eleventh and twelfth centuries... or what terrorists do today. That doesn't invalidate their concerns, especially in the World of Darkness. But it does mean that, in a game that's meant "For Mature Minds," the Talons require an extra bit of maturity.

You have that maturity. I trust you. Don't exclude the Talons from your chronicles. They deserve to have a part in them.

Red Talons™

Name:	Breed:	Pack Name:
Player:	Auspice:	Pack Totem:
Chronicle:	Camp:	Concept:

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●○○○○	Charisma	●○○○○	Perception	●○○○○
Dexterity	●○○○○	Manipulation	●○○○○	Intelligence	●○○○○
Stamina	●○○○○	Appearance	●○○○○	Wits	●○○○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Alertness	○○○○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○	Computer	○○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	○○○○○
Brawl	○○○○○	Drive	○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Dodge	○○○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Expression	○○○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Occult	○○○○○
Primal-Urge	○○○○○	Performance	○○○○○	Politics	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Stealth	○○○○○	Rituals	○○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Survival	○○○○○	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds		Gifts	Gifts
	○○○○○		
	○○○○○		
	○○○○○		
	○○○○○		
	○○○○○		

Renown

Glory

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Wisdom

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Rank

Rage

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Gnosis

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Willpower

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Health

Bruised		❑
Hurt	-1	❑
Injured	-1	❑
Wounded	-2	❑
Mauled	-2	❑
Crippled	-5	❑
Incapacitated		❑

Tribal Weakness

CANNOT REGAIN GNOSIS IN CITIES

Red Talons™

Homid	Glabro	Crinos	Hispo	Lupus
No Change	Strength (+2)____	Strength (+4)____	Strength (+3)____	Strength (+1)____
	Stamina (+2)____	Dexterity (+1)____	Dexterity (+2)____	Dexterity (+2)____
	Appearance (-1)____	Stamina (+3)____	Stamina (+3)____	Stamina (+2)____
	Manipulation (-2)____	Appearance 0	Manipulation (-3)____	Manipulation (-3)____
		Manipulation (-3)____	+1 Die to Bite Damage	-2 Perception Diff.
Difficulty: 6	Difficulty: 7	Difficulty: 6	Difficulty: 7	Difficulty: 6
		INCITE DELIRIUM IN HUMANS		

Other Traits

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Fetishes

Item:_____ Level____ Gnosis____
Power:_____
Item:_____ Level____ Gnosis____
Power:_____
Item:_____ Level____ Gnosis____
Power:_____
Item:_____ Level____ Gnosis____
Power:_____

Rites

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Combat

Maneuver/Weapon	Roll	Difficulty	Damage	Range	Rate	Clip

Brawling Chart

Maneuver	Roll	Diff	Damage
Bite	Dex+Brawl	5	Strength+1/A
Body Tackle	Dex+Brawl	7	Special/B
Claw	Dex+Brawl	6	Strength+1/A
Grapple	Dex+Brawl	6	Strength/B
Kick	Dex+Brawl	7	Strength+1/B
Punch	Dex+Brawl	6	Strength/B

A=Aggravated Damage
B=Bashing Damage

Armor:_____

Red Talons™

Nature: Demeanor:

Merits & Flaws

Merit	Type	Cost	Flaw	Type	Bonus

Expanded Background

Ancestors

Mentor

Pure Breed

Kinfolk

Totem

Possessions

Gear (Carried):

Equipment (Owned):

Sept

Name:

Caern Location:

Level: Type:

Totem:

Leader:

Experience

TOTAL:

Gained From:

TOTAL SPENT:

Spent On:

Red Talons™

History

Prelude

Description

Age:

Hair:

Eyes:

Race:

Nationality:

Sex:

	Height	Weight
Homid:		
Glabro:		
Crinos:		
Hispo:		
Lupus:		

Battle Scars:

Metis Deformity:

Visuals

Pack Chart

Character Sketch

TRIBEBOOK: Red Talons™

Bloody Claws of Vengeance

There are monsters in the wilderness, monsters that want the entire human race scourged from the face of the planet. These creatures have been counting humanity's sins against Nature since the beginning of civilization, and they are ready to exact bloody revenge. Unfortunately for humanity, they have what seems to be divine sanction to carry out their wrath. They are the Red Talons.

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